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—DC'S OLD NEW SUPERHERO—
THE BLUE BEETLE
—AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH—
BUGS BUNNY
AND INTRODUCING—
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OUR NEW GOLDEN AGE COLUMNIST!
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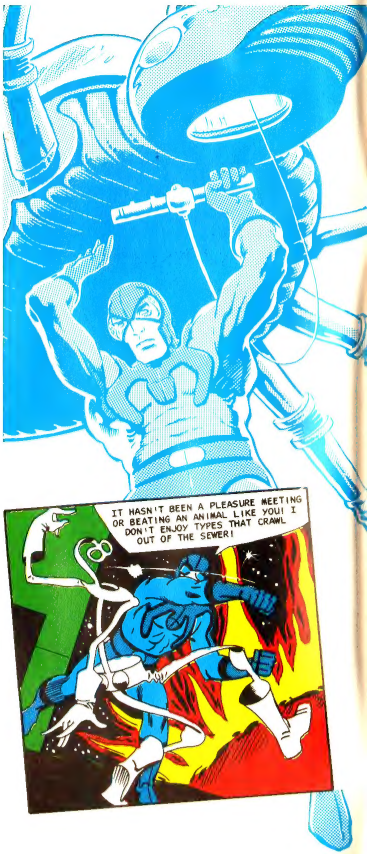
HAPPY HAL'S HOWLINGS

Last issue I really goofed. One of our contributing editors went far beyond the call of duty to help us create what may be the best issue of **COMICS FEATURE** ever. In fact, I will immodestly say that it is one of the best issues of any fanzine ever! And yet we managed to forget to credit him for his work. That is unforgivable, and I do hereby beg his pardon in print. I sincerely hope that he understands that the slight was certainly not intentional and that we do appreciate his efforts.

After all of that you may well wonder who did all of the work that I am talking about. None other than that workhorse that produces all of the feature pieces for this magazine as well as contributing the **Animated Antics** and **Heroes** columns each issue. That gentleman is James Van Hise, contributing editor extraordinaire! Let's all pause to congratulate and thank him for his efforts. Last issue he contributed the interviews with Lee, Kirby, Shooter and Thomas, the hero histories of Spider-Man, the FF and the X-Men and the brief history of Marvel as well as the animation piece. Quite a bit of work. This issue he contributes his regular columns and the piece on the mutants. Next issue we have a very major feature article on the FF coming up where we will reveal how new writer Roger Stern and new artist John Buscema will approach the book. With all admiration for John Byrne, I must admit that I do not expect a decline in quality on the book. The issue after we should reveal the news about some very special projects at DC, then after that it's Marvel's New Universe, then the new Superman, then...well, you get the point.

Till next month...

—HAPPY HAL



COMICS FEATURE

COLUMNS

COMICS ON FILM
The myriad crossovers from the comic book page to celluloid both past and future are the basis for a brand new column by Ed Gross!
6

HEROES
This time James Van Hise looks at one of the oldest continuing heroes of the comic book world, but one of DC's newest: The Blue Beetle. Learn all the fascinating facts behind this durable superhero!
8

FUN & PROFIT
Mike Benton reveals the perils of selling your collection—and tells you how to get the most out of it. Plus loads of other tips on collecting and investing.
14

GOLDEN AGE
The superheroes and World War II were strongly linked. In some ways the war led to the growth of the superhero, but eventually it almost brought about his demise! Roy Thomas takes over this column with this issue and he has some interesting installments planned!
18

GAMES
And now for something completely different! Steve Perrin takes a look at all of the other fascinating games besides the superhero which he normally focuses on!
22

ANIMATED ANTICS
Guest columnist Joel Rasmussen journeyed to Beverly Hills for an interview with one of the animation world's genuine superstars: Bugs Bunny!
44

FEATURES

MARVEL'S MUTANT UNIVERSE

Over two decades ago, five young mutants first starred in their own comic book title. Their course has been perilous and they never achieved top star status, eventually being cancelled. But then, amazingly they were revived to become the most popualr characters in comic books! Now, a large portion of the Marvel Universe orbits around various mutants, the X-Men, of course, but also the Fallen Angels, New Mutants, X-Factor, Firestar...and sometimes the list seems almost endless. James Van Hise talked to artists, editors and writers behind the myriad books to learn what the future holds for Marvel's Merry Mutants!
26

MY "IDEEL": MICKEY SPILLANE

Max Allan Collins, a prominent author in his own right, with several critically-acclaimed mystery novels, a comic book and a newspaper strip to his credit, frankly reveals how he felt when he first met his lifelong idol...and how he felt when he visited him at his home. Mickey Spillane, Max's hero, is simply the bestselling mystery novelist of all time...and perhaps the best!
50

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DEPARTMENTS

HAL'S HOWLINGS!
2

FEATURE NEWS
4

LETTERS
36

LISTINGS
40

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FEATURE NEWS

LEGENDS

JOHN BYRNE'S NEW DC MINI-SERIES

Close on the heels of his **Superman** mini-series, John Byrne is illustrating the **Legends** mini-series which is edited by Mike Gold and written by John Ostrander and Len Wein. **Legends** will involve major cross-overs with most of DC's titles and feature about 35 DC characters.

The 6 issue **Legends** mini-series opens with a philosophical debate between Darkseid and The Phantom Stranger about why humanity needs heroes. The series then examines the roles of heroes in our society, our need for heroes and whether the existence of super-heroes by its nature generates super-villains. The series also deals with How America, particularly the government, views this parade of super beings operating outside the law and any strict controls.

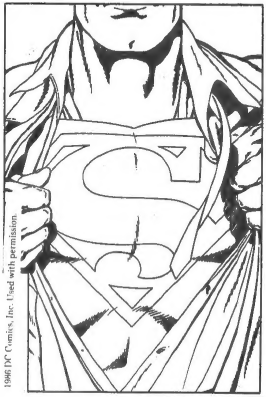
Unlike the **Crisis** series which narrowed the DC universe and dealt with its redundancies, **Legends** will serve as the starting point for at least three brand new series.

The first new series will be a new version of the Justice League of America, one which more precisely defines the concept of a league of characters in that they will be those characters who unite because they are the best able to deal with a specific crisis.

The second series will feature the new Flash, Wally West, and deal with the fact that he is a third generation hero in that he is the third character to bear the name The Flash.

The third new series will be The Suicide Squad. The original Suicide Squad had two try-outs in **The Brave & The Bold** twenty years ago but have never had their own series. What relation this series has with the original Suicide Squad remains to be seen.

Legends 1 will appear in late August and the series will follow monthly. **Legends** crossovers in **Batman** and **Detective** will appear just prior to the first issue in the mini-series.



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SUPERMAN GOES TWO-ON-ONE!

The first issue of the new DC mini-series, **The Man of Steel**, will be a comic book first in that the issue will be published with two different front covers. The drawing at above right will appear on the initial orders sent to the direct market (i.e. comic book specialty stores). The version at below right will appear on those issues distributed in the regular newsstand outlets and on re-orders for the direct market.

The Man of Steel is a six-issue, bi-weekly mini-series written and pencilled by John Byrne and inked by Dick Giordano. This limited series will completely revamp Superman's origin, powers and timeline. This is the series which will throw out nearly 50 years of continuity, dispensing with such old concepts as Superboy, and return to the concept of Superman being the sole survivor of Krypton's destruction. The first issue will appear in late June.

STEVE ENGLEHART TO WRITE DAREDEVIL

Steve Englehart brings his vision to the Man Without Fear as he becomes the regular **Daredevil** scripter, tentatively beginning with issue 239.

Steve's **Daredevil** will pick up where Frank Miller left off, continuing to develop the character in his new setting. "In essence, Frank wiped the slate clean, allowing me the opportunity to treat this as a completely new beginning," Steve notes.

"The series will continue to explore both Daredevil and Matt Murdock, even as I bring my own interpretations into play. This will be my most realistic series."

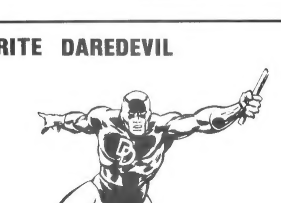
Steve also writes **West Coast Avengers** and the **Vision And Scarlet Witch** limited series, and plans to begin work on his **Silver Surfer** limited series when the Vision/Witch run ends with issue 12.

As he further examines the character of Daredevil, Steve will focus on the elements that make him unique as a hero, including the all-important facet of his blindness.

"Normally, a blind person is severely restricted by the handicap, but in Matt Murdock's case he is able to completely overcome that limitation," he explains. "Given that aspect of Matt's personality, he isn't likely to accept *any* limitations for long."

This concept will lead to what Steve refers to as Daredevil's ascent from the darkness. "I expect to build this storyline slowly and realistically over the next year or more, before drawing it to a resolution," Steve adds.

No artist has been named to the series. Newcomer Louis Williams has been assigned Steve's first issue, and is among those under consideration for the regular assignment. Issue 233 was the final issue by Frank Miller and David Mazzucchelli. Issues 234-238 will be fill-in issues.



Frank Miller reportedly left the title because David Mazzucchelli had chosen to leave. Mazzucchelli's reason for leaving the book (and Marvel entirely) may be hinted at on the splash page of issue 233—which is dedicated to Jack Kirby.

MARVEL'S NEW UNIVERSE

The summer months of June, July and August will bring the first 8 titles in what Marvel is calling their "new universe." The initial titles being released are: **Star Brand, Psi-Force, Justice, Mare, Spitfire and the Troubleshooters, Nightmask, Kickers, Inc. and D.P. 7.**

These books will in no way inter-relate with the familiar Marvel universe occupied by Spider-Man, the Fantastic Four and the rest of Marvel's pantheon of colorful heroes.

Star Brand 1 will be written by Jim Shooter and pencilled by John Romita Jr. Star Brand is a weapon, more powerful than any other in the universe. It falls into the hands of an Earthman, Kenneth Connell. Star Brand brings its bearer pain, worry, suspicion and fear—fear that it will fall into the wrong hands, or fear that it is already in the wrong hands. Another man might live only to pass the dreaded thing on. But Kenneth Connell is a man like no other.

Spitfire and the Troubleshooters is being written by Eliot Brown and John Morelli, with art by Herb Trimpe. The story spins out from Jenny Swensen who declares war on her father's employers after he's murdered. With the help of 5 outstanding MIT students, she steals her father's entire lab, including his technological wonder, the MACS (Man Amplified Construction Suit) which her father's employer, Karl Krotze, intended to develop into combat armor. Jenny and her friends use the MACS to wage war on Krotze while having to evade the law. She did, after all, steal things which, although developed by her father, were owned by Krotze.

"The New Universe titles will strive for a high level of realism," says Marvel publicist Steve Saffel, "thus readers will recognize the world in which these heroes live as being very much like their own, with the major difference being that there are spectacular adventures taking place in the New Universe."

The New Universe was developed by Marvel, under the direction of Jim Shooter, as a way to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the founding of the first Marvel Universe.

POWER PACK GOES DIRECT MARKET

CLIMAX OF X-MEN MASSACRE TO APPEAR THERE.

Power Pack will become a direct market book (available only in comic book specialty stores) beginning with issue 26. In issue 27, appearing in late August, the climax of a series of cross-overs involving **X-Men**, X-Factor, Thor and **Power Pack** will climax what has come to be called the "X-Men massacre story" in which some of the X-Men die and are replaced by such characters as Havoc, Dazzler and Longshot. Which X-Men will die is being kept a closely guarded secret. **X-Men 212** will feature the new lineup and the massacre aftermath.

COMICS ON FILM

BY EDWARD GROSS

Move over 007. Give it up Rambo. Turn in your hat and whip Indy. The comic book superheroes are making a cinematic comeback which threatens to eclipse all pretenders to the throne, once again fueling the imagination of audiences around the world.

Comics are certainly not a new inspiration for filmmakers. The medium has provided the basis for films or television shows almost since the time of its inception. Comics have filled film and television directors with the insatiable desire to grasp the magical qualities of their favorite heroes, and somehow translate them to the screen.

Although the classic animated adventures of Popeye were probably among the first such adaptations, the comic book superheroes didn't really leave their mark on film until the arrival of the movie serials of the 1940s. It was these weekly cliffhangers which provided audiences with their first "flesh and blood" incarnations of comic books. They were astounded when young Billy Batson uttered the word "SHAZAM," and was magically transformed into Captain Marvel. Kirk Alyn donning the famous red and blue uniform of Superman and soaring through the air with the greatest of ease, was greeted by gasps of amazement. Flash Gordon brought them to the world of Mongo, while Batman, the dark avenger of the night, made the dark streets of Gotham City safe from crime. Audiences marvelled at low budget (but unprecedented) techniques which allowed Superman to stop moving cars, and other heroes to battle for the sake of democracy.

Over the next decade, both Superman and Flash Gordon made it to episodic television, later to be joined by Sheena, Queen of the Jungle and Buck Rogers. Of them, only Superman proved to be a hit. It ran for seven seasons, although its first is, by far, the best. The Man of Steel will be studied more closely in future columns and in far greater depth in my **Superheroes on Film Files Magazine**.

Things slowed down until the mid 1960s when the campy **Batman** premiered on ABC, inspiring a short-lived fad. A motion picture based on the series followed.

During the 70s television presented a multitude of comic book heroes, including Wonder Woman (portrayed first by Cathy Leigh Crosby and then, much more successfully, by Lynda Carter), The Incredible Hulk (starring Bill Bixby as Dr. Banner and Lou Ferrigno as the Hulk), Spider-Man (a weak entry featuring Nicholas Hammond as Peter Parker/Spider-Man), Phil (**The Twilight Zone**) DeGuere's tv movie of Dr. Strange and two tele-movies of Captain America (portrayed, ugh, as a motorcycle-riding hero). It wasn't until 1978 and the release of **Superman-The Movie** that audiences and filmmakers alike rediscovered the true potential and magic of comics on film. This one movie has actually helped redefine the genre.

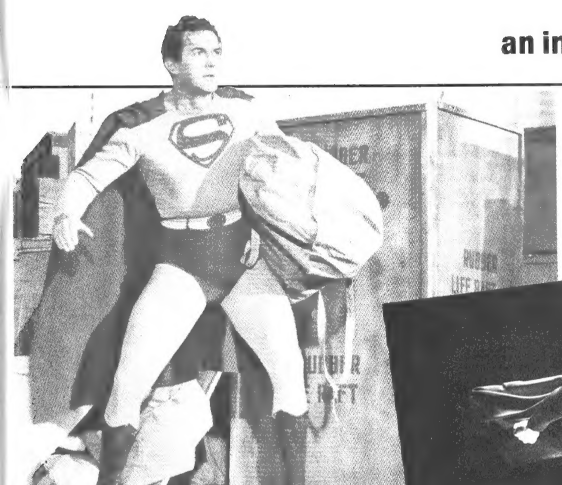
Audiences were far more sophisticated than in the 40s. They no longer accepted the low budget special effects, hokey sets and illfitting costumes. In their place was a multi-million dollar spectacular which truly allowed

viewers to escape into the fantasy and relate to the heroics that unfolded on the screen. The ads for Superman proclaimed that you would believe that a man could fly -- and they were right!

A couple of years later, Robin Williams portrayed Popeye in Robert Altman's film of the same name, and **Superman II** was released to great affect. While the former was only minimally successful, the latter solidified the legend of the Man of Steel. And Hollywood's love affair with the super hero. Unfortunately **Superman III**, released in 1983, was a critical disaster and only a moderate box office success. It wasn't that audiences were bored but rather that it simply wasn't a very good movie. Yet the film community viewed it as a lack of interest in superheroes. Their point was seemingly driven home by the disasterous (though somewhat underrated) **Supergirl**.

In the wake of all this, original heroes rose to dominance at the box office. Heroes such as Rambo, Commando, Remo Williams and Indiana Jones strode the land. The tide seems to be changing. No less than four comics-inspired films will begin production this year, including **Spider-Man—The Movie, Captain America, Howard The Duck** and **Superman IV.**

an introduction



Three film supermen—George Reeves, Kirk Alyn and Chris Reeve from left to right.

Spider-Man, to be directed by Joseph Zito, will begin production shortly for a Christmas 1986 release. Little is known of the plot, except that it will chronicle Spidey's origin and feature a villain from the comics. Zito expresses that the film will be treated along the lines of the Superman series, marrying tongue-in-cheek humor with realism.

Michael **(Death Wish)** Winner will helm **Captain America**, a character he terms "Rambo in drag." Again, little is known except that it, too, will feature an origin. Cannon Films is trying to lure Marlon Brando in as the Red Skull. In response to the critics, the director has stated that the film's violence will be completely unlike that of **Death Wish**.

Howard the Duck! What can be said about a cigar toting, talking duck? Not much, except Donald he isn't. **Lea (Back to the Future)** Thompson stars in this William Hyuck-directed/George Lucas-produced film. This and **Labyrinth** mark Lucas' first theatrical venture in the genre since 1983's **Return of the Jedi**.

At this point in time, **Superman IV** is still a mystery. Cannon intends on investing upwards of $40 million on the project, and has lured Christopher Reeve back into his red and blue tights via an astronomical salary and an exceptional screenplay. As they say, it's nearly all in the script.

Other films, such as one featuring the Fantastic Four, are in preproduction. If any of these are a success, there is little doubt that more productions will follow. We can probably still look forward to a deadly serious Batman movie, penned by 007 and Superman's Tom Mankiewicz.

The purpose of this column will be to explore the world of comics on film, past, present and future. In months to come we'll look back at the movie serials, provide an overview to all adaptations of the Man of Steel and take a sneak preview of upcoming productions. And who knows what else – I'm open to suggestions!

Until next time, keep your capes fastened, your cowls in place and pass the popcorn.

Ed Gross is currently with United Artists and working on a number of book and television related projects including a series devoted to the screen exploits of comic book heroes.

HEROES

BY JAMES VAN HISE

DC's ground-breaking mini-series **Crisis On Infinite Earths** was true to its promise in that it involved all of the characters in the DC universe. But not all of these characters originated with DC. Captain Marvel had been acquired from Fawcett. The characters from the long-defunct Quality Comics group (The Ray, Uncle Sam, Black Condor and others) became part of the DC stable of stars as the Freedom Fighters. But DC's most recent acquisition appeared under the banner for the first time in **Crisis**. These are the Charlton superheroes, most of whom originated in the Sixties. In the hearts of many long-time fans, premiere among ex-Charlton heroes is The Blue Beetle. His status is underscored by the retelling of his beginnings in **Secret Origins** (by Len Wein and Gil Kane) and the forthcoming mini-series. When the choice was made as to which Charlton hero to revive first, The Blue Beetle won out. For a guy with no superpowers and a non-violent handgun, that's quite an achievement!

The Blue Beetle is a survivor. He has managed to return in one form or another every few years since he originated at Fox Comics in 1939. The first incarnation was rookie cop Dan Garret who took a dose of vitamin ZX to gain superpowers. Slipping on a suit of blue chain mail he became The Blue Beetle! There was even a short-lived newspaper strip which, at one point, was rendered by a talented newcomer named Jack Kirby. Fox folded but the Beetle returned briefly in the mid-Fifties in **Space Adventures** and **Nature Boy** only to fade out again. When the character was revived in 1964 for ten issues, it was still Dan Garret but this time his origin claimed the powers of the Blue Beetle were acquired from an enchanted scarab. His last issue was written by a newcomer to comics back in 1966 – **COMICS FEATURE** columnist Roy Thomas.

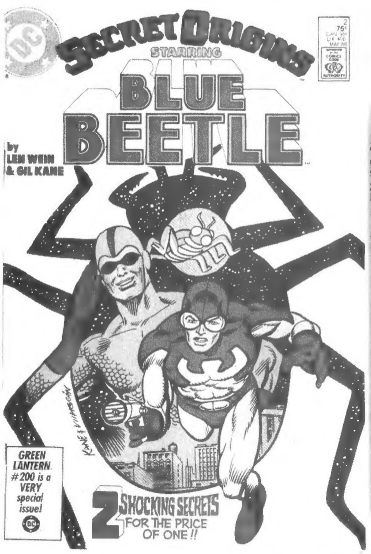
THE ALL NEW BLUE BEETLE.

While Charlton's first run at The Blue Beetle was folding other heroes at the company were on the rise. Among them was **Captain Atom**. It is in the pages of that title that another Blue Beetle was introduced some eight months later.

Captain Atom (formerly **Strange Suspense Stories**) 83 (Nov. 1966) features the first appearance of the new Blue Beetle. Although written by Gary Friedrich, the character was revamped, redesigned and illustrated by Steve Ditko. Ditko had left Marvel with the July 1966 issues of **Spider-Man** and **Strange Tales** (see **COMICS FEATURE** 42 closeup on Dr. Strange). Ditko immediately took up residence at Charlton. He had been drawing for them off-and-on for many years. Now he proceeded to produce an exciting new version of one of comics oldest characters.

The new Blue Beetle is Ted Kord, a scientist who developed weaponry and devices to employ in a fight against crime. Located in Hub City, Kord has a weird beetle-shaped aircraft which he can operate by remote control and flies via anti-grav devices. He can lower himself from the nose of the craft on a control bar attached to a long cable that can also quickly pull him aboard as it zips off into the sky. His costume includes large bug-eyed eye pieces on a mask which cannot be pulled off unless it is first unlocked by pressing a secret chin device.

In his first seven-page appearance, the Beetle makes a grand entrance by capturing a gang of bank robbers. His first encounter with them is less than auspicious as he's knocked out. The Blue Beetle's appearance from the hovering craft and his fight with the gang is pure Ditko ac-


SECRET ORIGINS
STARRING
BLUE BEETLE
by LEN WEIN & GIL KANE
GREEN LANTERN #200 is a VERY special issue!
2 SHOCKING SECRETS FOR THE PRICE OF ONE!!

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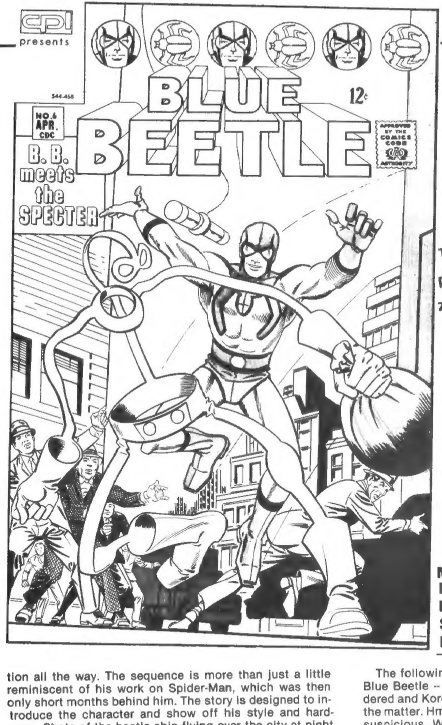


THE BLUE BEETLE

DC'S FIRST BLUE BEETLE AND CHARLTON'S LAST!

This Charlton story didn't even appear in a comic book but in CPL a fanzine devoted to Charlton characters!

THAT CERTAINLY CLEARS THE BLUE BEETLE! I WISH I COULD TELL HIM MYSELF!
AND NOW THE BEETLE CAN CONTINUE HIS FIGHT AGAINST INJUSTICE WITHOUT THE STIGMA OF A KILLER OVER HIM!

MANY BLUE BEETLE PANELS LOOK AS IF THEY COULD HAVE BEEN TAKEN RIGHT OUT OF A SPIDERMAN STORY!—THAT'S BECAUSE STEVE DITKO DID THEM BOTH.

tion all the way. The sequence is more than just a little reminiscent of his work on Spider-Man, which was then only short months behind him. The story is designed to introduce the character and show off his style and hardware. Shots of the beetle ship flying over the city at night give the strip a very weird ambience. The story shows that the Beetle isn't in for a smooth ride. The criminals he captures tell the police that the Blue Beetle was really their boss who betrayed them. The law begins to wonder about the real motives of this strange character.

The following issue introduces the tie-in to the original Blue Beetle -- Dan Garret. It seems that Garret was murdered and Kord is requested to come in for questioning on the matter. Hmmmm. The police release Kord but are still suspicious. Why did he return from a mysterious trip to Pago island alone while Dan Garret has not been heard from since? Kord definitely knows what happened as he thinks: "They would never believe the truth! It's even too incredible for me to believe ... and the proof is buried under tons of rock!"

BUT FIRST I HAVE TO LOSE MY FOLLOWING LONG ENOUGH TO DO IT! WHO GAVE ME THAT BLASTED NAME!
THAT'S THE SPECTER! DON'T LET HIM OUT OF YOUR SIGHT ...! AFTER HIM!
IF I CAN FIND A SPOT WHERE I CAN BLEND INTO THE BACKGROUND, I CAN GIVE THAT MOB THE SLIP... WHAT... NOT AGAIN!
YOU DON'T THINK YOUR LOOKS OR YOUR THREATS SCARED HE OFF FOR GOOD?
THAT BUG IS LIKE A LEECH. HE'S ALWAYS ON ME. HOW DOES HE DO IT?
FOR A MAN WHO HAS NO FUTURE YOU PICKED AN ODD PLACE TO DUCK INTO! BUT THEN YOU HAVE A POOR RECORD FOR DOING ANYTHING RIGHT!
© 1985 D.C. Comics
BLAST YOU! WHY DO YOU ALWAYS HAVE TO BUTT IN?! WHY CAN'T YOU LEAVE ME ALONE?!
AND TELL ME, HAS THAT BEEN YOUR GREAT GUIDING PRINCIPLE, SPECTER, ALIAS ROBBER, ALIAS DOUBLE MURDERER?

THE LAST DITKO BLUE BEETLE STORY HAD MANY OF THE STYLISTIC CHARACTERISTICS OF DITKO'S LESS-WIDELY PUBLISHED FANZINE WORK.

In issue 85, the Beetle saves an airliner by catching it in mid-air with his beetle ship and then takes on an enemy sub and battles a giant octopus. Not bad for a seven-page story.

In the Blue Beetle's final appearance in the pages of **Captain Atom** (86), he captures a criminal gang. Following a prolonged fight, he pulls a strange-looking gun on them and threatens, "Is anyone interested in seeing what I can do with this?" They aren't and give up. But they would have been surprised to see what it can really do. We have to wait to learn its peculiar properties.

This story ended by revealing that issue one of the all-new **Blue Beetle** was on sale, and with the mystery of Dan Garret and Pago Island still haunting Ted Kord. "How can I clear myself? I can't bring Dan Garret back to do it! ... And I can't go on like this!" Curiouser and curiouser....

THE SECRET REVEALED

In **Spider-Man** 31-33, Spidey fought the Master Planner and his similarly-garbed gang in a free-for-all. What has this to do with the Blue Beetle? Well, Ditko redrew those classic issues of **Spider-Man**, this time pitting the Beetle against the Squid Gang in **Blue Beetle** number one.

Ted Kord's assistant, Tracey, is troubled by the police probe of Kord and begs him to clear up the mystery. Kord is saddened that Tracey is also questioning him but doesn't feel that he can tell her the secret of Pago Island.

In issue two, Kord suits up as the Beetle, climbs aboard The Bug and flies out to Pago Island to try and sort out his feelings. When a light attracts his attention, he fears the worst. Upon landing he finds Tracey, who is trying to uncover something to help Ted Kord, the man she loves. Kord realizes that by keeping her in the dark to spare her feelings, he's only made things worse. He reveals his secret identity and explains the event he'd been trying to forget.

And a flashback sequence conveniently fills in the reader. Kord had been doing experiments for his Uncle Jarvis, a man his father had never gotten along with. Kord keeps pressing Jarvis for an explanation of what the experiments are all about. Finally Jarvis states that he'll reveal all the following day. But that night, there's an explosion at the lab and a body is found there. It is assumed to be Jar-

THE NEW BLUE BEETLE—More Gil Kane than Ditko?

© 1985 D C Comics

vis, even though it is burned beyond recognition.

Kord later finds a metal box in the lab. It contains information which seems to reveal the purpose of the experiments – the development of an indestructable android! There are also indications that Jarvis had a secret lab established on Pago island. Knowing that the authorities wouldn't believe him, Kord goes to an old college friend, Dan Garret. Together the two go to Pago island. There their worst suspicions are confirmed when androids capture them and destroy their boat.

Jarvis is alive and his super-android is near completion. Garret realizes that their only hope is to magically transform himself into the Blue Beetle. They are vastly outnumbered by the androids, but Garret is able to hold them off. Jarvis, in desperation, sends an overload through the androids. The blast catches Garret but also seemingly kills Jarvis in the feedback. Garret, still garbed as the Blue Beetle, lies mortally wounded. He asks Ted Kord to try to carry on his work for him. Kord, guilt-ridden because he had unknowingly helped his uncle, promises to carry on. A cave-in separates him from the dying Blue Beetle.

Using his father's scientific workshop, Kord develops the beetle ship (called The Bug) and the other devices employed by the new Blue Beetle. Ted Kord will keep his promise to carry on Dan Garret's fight against villainy and injustice.

End flashback.

Just as Kord finishes explaining all this to Tracey, two androids burst through from the ground below. He is barely able to get Tracy to safety in the Bug. Kord manages to hold off the robots and knock them into a deep crevice. Back in The Bug, he uses his ship to pick up boulders and fill in the crevice, insuring that the androids will remain trapped What he doesn't know is that deep within the caverns, the super android is still intact. The machinery connected to it is still active. But how long before it comes to life? Quite a long time as it turned out. It didn't happen during the Beetle's adventures chronicled in the late Sixties ....

A BEETLE AND HIS GUN

Before the first issue of the new Blue Beetle, he had threatened a crook with his special wicked-looking gun. But what does the gun really do? Is it a laser? A blaster?

Something worse?

. In issue three, the Beetle is up against another gang -- who all dress alike! This time it's the Madmen and their bizarre, multi-colored costumes suggest a character that Ditko would create for DC not very long after -- The Creeper.

In his first encounter with the Madmen, the Beetle gets the bejeezus beaten out of him and the gang makes off with his gun. The only problem is that they can't figure out how to fire it. Not to be outdone, they wisely guess that just having the gun with no one knowing what it can do will frighten those they come up against -- and they're right! Some guess that the gun emits a sound that drives people insane while others are sure it fires a death ray! When the Beetle gets his gun back, he uses it on the Madmen -- revealing it to be a flashgun! "You jokers didn't think I'd carry a deadly weapon? This gun serves my purposes!" Kord rounds up the gang but a new puzzle has been added to complicate his life. People claim to have seen Dan Garret in Hub City again.

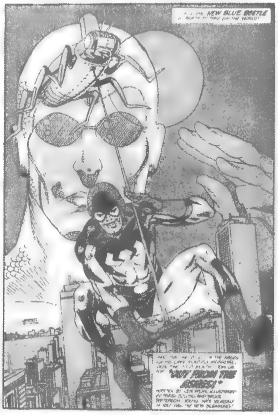
I STILL SAY SCIENTISTS ARE A THREAT TO US ALL. MY BAKER SAYS HIS ASTROLOGER HAS PROOF AND I HAD A DREAM ABOUT THEM SO I KNOW IT'S TRUE!
A FRIEND OF MINE HEARD ABOUT A GUY WHO HAD MYSTIC VIBRATIONS REVEALING THAT THEY FAKED THE EVIDENCE TO CLEAR THE BEETLE! THAT'S A FACT!
TED, THEY'RE STILL AT IT!
TRACEY, MOST PEOPLE AREN'T INTERESTED IN TRUTH OR FACT! EVEN IF IT'S PRESENTED TO THEM, THEY DON'T WANT TO JUDGE FOR THEMSELVES, ESPECIALLY IF IT GOES AGAINST WHAT OTHERS BELIEVE! THEY'D RATHER GO ALONG WITH WHAT OTHERS SAY OR POPULAR OPINIONS, IT'S SAFER FOR THEM!

STRANGE ADVENTURES

Even Ted Kord catches a glimpse of Dan, but then loses him in the crowded city streets. He suspects that Dan has not tried to contact him because he has partial amnesia. So Kord tracks Dan's movements to the expedition that was being arranged at the time they left on the side trip to Pago Island.

Taking the Bug, Kord travels underwater to a small Asian country where the expedition was bound. There the Beetle encounters a group of thugs disguised as an ancient cult, the Men of the Masks. Garret has secured a treasure guarded by the cult. Kord finally meets Garret but it turns out to be an old rival of Garret's in disguise. The fraud chose to use Dan's good reputation to finish organizing the expedition in order to steal the treasure for himself. Dynamite set off to drive back the cult also causes the temple to collapse and a dormant volcano to become active. In the midst of this, the Beetle dukes it out with the imposter.

It's an open secret that Steve Ditko contributed a lot to the writing of the first 38 issues of **Spider-Man**. The writing style changed after he left the book -- even though the credits listed Stan Lee as sole writer. Many bits from Ditko's Spider-Man stories turned up in the new Blue Beetle. People stand on street corners mouthing their opinions on issues of the day (such as whether scientists,



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THE BLUE BEETLE IS A SURVIVOR, WITH STORIES RANGING BACK TO 1939—HE'S ALREADY OUTLIVED TWO COMIC BOOK COMPANIES AND IS NOW AT HIS THIRD!!!

the Blue Beetle, etc were to be trusted). There are even bits where a supporting character confronts some of these sidewalk experts and tells them off – although in **Spider-Man** we'd usually only see Peter Parker overhearing people talking about the dreaded Spider-Man and becoming more and more depressed.

Ditko's writing hand became obvious in issue 5 in "The Destroyer of Heroes." Characters include stock Ditko archetypes – a know-it-all-critic and a misled common man. This story features more polemic and political undertones than any other Blue Beetle tale. It even includes a band of scruffy hippies as antagonists. Anyone who'd seen the strips that Ditko had been writing for such fanzines as **Witzend** (for example: "The Avenging World") would recognize his creative hand all over this issue. It stands out above the others because it does make a statement (optimism vs. pessimism) and forces the reader to think. Vic Sage (who appears as The Question in Ditko's backup feature in **Blue Beetle**) makes a guest-appearance in this story.

Issue 6, although advertised in Charlton comics, never appeared. The final Ditko Blue Beetle story was published (including the cover advertised for the issue) several years later in a 1974 Charlton fanzine, **Charlton Portfolio**. Fans had contacted Nicola Cuti at Charlton and he had searched the files until the artwork for the issue was found.

"A Spector Is Haunting Hub City!" is more in line with the oddball superhero strips Ditko has written and drawn by himself in the Seventies and Eighties. It features a very strange villain who uses an invisibility suit – a suit which renders him partially transparent while the suit mechanisms themselves can be seen. This makes him look bizarre and enables him to hide in plain sight. The story even includes a big fight in a museum among the space exhibits, very much like the museum seen in **Spider-Man 36**.

The Blue Beetle is a well-conceived character. He's just as much fun to read now as he was almost twenty years ago. Since some of those old fans are now at DC, it looks like we're in store for more special Blue Beetle adventures at last.

CF

JAMES VAN HISE IS THE EDITOR OF MOVIELAND *AND A CONTRIBUTING EDITOR OF* COMICS FEATURE.

FUN & PROFIT

BY MIKE BENTON

SOMEDAY ...

YOU are going to sell your comic collection.

Someday you're going to sell your comic collection.

You'll get rid of every comic that you ever read, and you'll sell everything at once.

And unless you do it right, you're going to regret it.

"Most collectors," said a comic book store owner of ten years experience, "sell me their entire collections, usually all at once. They make a big decision to finally sell some of their comics and then decide they want to get it over with all at once, so they come in and dump everything in front of me."

He looked apologetic. "And I take advantage of them."

Comic collecting is funny. One year, all you can think about are comics -- new comics, back issues, first issues, complete sets and next month's new titles.

And then one year comics just aren't part of your life anymore. You wonder why you spent all that time and money on books you no longer want to read. The comics themselves lose their magic.

There you sit in front of hundreds and thousands of books, thinking: How can I get rid of these?

Most collectors make a major mistake at this point. Instead of methodically selling their collection to other collectors, they liquidate it at a loss to their local comic book shop owner.

"I get collections for about five to ten cents a comic," the comic book dealer told me. "I buy cheap because these people want to sell everything. And the more comics they have, the less money they get per book. I've spent $250 to get 3,000 comics and then turned around and gave $300 for a 5,000 book collection. After a certain point, I almost pay the same price no matter how big the collection is."

Another dealer at a convention made it even more clear to me how a collector is at a disadvantage if he tries to sell his entire collection. "I laugh at these kids who come up to me and say that they have a $1,000 comic collection but they'll take $500 for it. I don't play that way. I can afford to wait until someone wants to dump that thousand dollar collection for fifty bucks. Look, there's always more comic books than collector dollars. Plenty of people want to unload their collections at any price."

By now I hope you get the message. Selling your collection in a big lot to one dealer can be the last mistake you'll make as a collector.

Yet you don't have to bite the bullet and take it. There are four steps you can take to get more cash for your entire collection when you decide to sell:

This is the easiest step you can take to getting a higher dollar for your collection. You've heard the expression about the "one bad apple." It's true for a comic collection as well.

I remember at one convention a collector had brought in his huge accumulation of war comics. He had large runs of **Sgt. Fury**, the DC titles, the older Charlton books and even a complete set of E.C.'s **Frontline Combat** and **Two-Fisted Tales**.

He took his books to a major mid-western dealer at the show. The dealer completely ignored the $2,000 set of EC comics. Instead he started groaning about more "junky Charlton comics and **Sgt. Furys**." He said (very truthfully) that he sold those kind of books for a quarter each. He ignored the EC comics and lumped them in with the garbage titles. He offered $275 for the whole collection.

The collector went into a state of shock, and moved along. As he was showing the EC comics by themselves to another collector, a different dealer came up and offered $700 for the sets of **Frontline Combat** and **Two-Fisted Tales**.

A deal was made, and then the collector took the remaining "junk" books and sold them for $225.

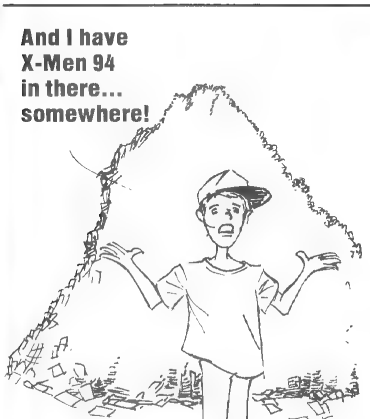
The moral is this: sell garbage at garbage prices, but don't throw the gold in with the garbage.

Every collection has a few nice books. If you want to dump your comics, always remove the top-dollar books.

Many collectors think that if they 'salt their collection with a few high-dollar books, it will make the rest of their low-value comics look better.

Not true.

BUY, BUY, SELL, SELL...



2 Make your collection look like a collection -- not an accommodation.

I remember going to a collector's garage as he was moving. He had 5,000 comics stored in boxes, baskets, grocery bags and on top of shelves.

No two comics of the same title were together. I tried to look over his collection that he wanted to sell. It seemed as if most of the books (like the majority of *all* comics) were common issues worth less than a buck each.

I made an offer that I thought was fair. He looked surprised, but accepted it with regret.

I later got all the books separated out into their titles and in order. Now I was surprised. He had a nice run of **X-Men** from 20-175, almost complete and worth as much as I paid for the rest of the books.

I remembered seeing only one or two **X-Men** as I dug through his piles and piles of books. Had they all been together and in a straight run, I certainly would have offered more for the entire collection.

3 Prune them books.

As you collect, you always accumulate a few coverless and beat-to-death comics. You'll pick up a few books in absolutely lousy condition just to read.

Make sure you remove such comics when you take your collection in to sell.

Dealers are like mother-in-laws. They always look for the worst, and ignore the best.

When they see a few damaged comics, they assume you probably didn't take too good care of your collection and that you really aren't a serious collector.

Such comics would only fetch a few cents anyway, so take them away from your better books when you sell your collection.

4 Keep ten books.

If you don't need the money, keep these ten books for another year (or ten years). If they're your best comics, they'll probably be worth more the longer you hold onto them.

If you do need the money, take those ten comics back in a few weeks later to the dealer who bought your collection. You'll get more money doing this than if you sold those ten books with your other comics.

. . . . . .

AN EXPERIMENT

Speaking of selling comics, you may be interested in an experiment I did this month.

I had a 1940 edition of **New York World's Fair Comics**, the early giant comic with Superman, Batman and other DC heroes. In "fine" condition, it had a guide value of $350.

It was a good example of a book that is in high collector demand -- a nice condition, early DC superhero comic.

I've always seen the ads by dealers that say "Nobody Pays More!" or "I Pay Top Dollar For Old Comics!"

I picked out the six top national comic book dealers and called them to get their offer for the book. Here are the prices I got: $200, $175, $200, $225, $200 and $200.

I almost thought they were all on the same phone line and collaborating on long-distance price fixing!

What it did prove is that there is a definite and almost exact market value for *high demand* comics in nice condition. Almost every dealer told me that he paid 50 percent to 60 percent of Guide for such comics.

Interesting, interesting.

(Yes, I did sell the comic.)

FIRE AND BRIMSTONE AND COMIC BOOK DEATH TRAPS:

In myths, there is always mention of the "sulfur and brimstone" smell when Satan appears. If that's true, then the devil may be living in your comic book closet.

Comic books, as they age and decay, give off invisible vapors and gases. One of these gases is a sulfide compound because the comic book pages themselves are impregnated with sulfide acidic fibers.

When large amounts of comics are stored together in an enclosed space, such as a closet, sulfur vapors accumulate.

A chemist friend of mine told me that there is indeed a measurable quantity of sulfurous gas surrounding old books.

The more comics stored together, the more gas.

Keeping a book in a sealed plastic bag only traps the gases in with the book. The bag becomes a comic book death trap, causing the trapped gas to age and yellow the comic.

I prefer to leave my comics unbagged so they can *breathe* and release the gas.

Now, please -- no off-color jokes about comics passing gas.

Anyway, think of this the next time you pile thousands of comics together on top of each other in a small enclosed space.

STRICTLY BUSH—LEAGUE HEROES:

Many collectors today concentrate entirely on new issues as they speculate and try to make a profit on comics.

I think that if you are serious about investing in comics, you should also try to include a few "golden oldies" in your collection as well.

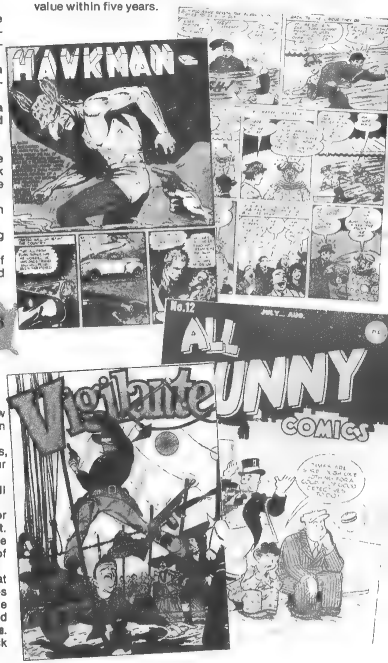
A carefully chosen old comic from the early 1940s will always hold its value and grow in worth.

For most collectors, I recommend buying nice DC or Timely (Marvel) comics from the 1940s for investment. However, if you're looking for a higher return (and a little more risk), then check out some of the neglected comics of the years 1937 to 1943.

I'm talking about the hundreds of minor and offbeat superhero comics published by the smaller companies before World War II. These books are actually more scarce than the common DCs and Timelys. Many kids saved issues of **Batman, Superman, Captain Marvel** and **Captain America**. Not too many saved tales of Captain Lightning, the Black Terror or the Flame.

What's more, you can still find pre-1943 comics such as these in Fine or better condition for under $50. Similar DCs and Timelys go for $50 to $200!

I predict that these minor superhero titles published before World War II (particularly 1940 to 1941) will triple in value within five years.



...HOT/TIPS....HOT/TIPS....HOT/TIPS....

ARE WE DONE YET?

Because of the four month or so delay between the time this column is written and when you read it, I won't know the current status of **Thundercats 1**.

I will say, however, that there is an unholy amount of price gouging in this book. As I write this, dealers at local conventions are asking $6 to $9 for a three-month old comic.

Please don't buy at this price.

I think that the book may actually be worth $7 or $8 someday -- but not for a few years!

There are still tens of thousands of copies of this issue sitting in dealer backrooms and speculators' closets.

Sure, today dealers may offer you $2 or $3 for your number 1 issue, but that won't last either, once the market stabilizes for this title.

Always be careful of books that take off like a rocket in the first three months of release. All this indicates is an unhealthy speculator interest rather than true collector demand.

The demand for a truly collectible comic builds gradually over the months and years. The first issue of the new **X-Men** (number 94) comic, for example, didn't take off for almost three years.

There's no way that a major comic book title released by a major company can be worth $9 in three months.

No way, never, forget it, and one more time, no.

Take the $9 and buy a truly collectible comic or a scarce older comic.

Leave **Thundercats 1** to the rich ten-year olds.

...HIT/TIPS....HOT/TIPS....HOST/TIPS....

IT'S MILLER TIME (AGAIN):

Telling collectors that Frank Miller comics are good buys is like saying that the sun is hot.

Still, there was a slight slump in demand for his books about six months to a year ago. Today, all of his work is again on the rise.

The most dramatic example of this is renewed interest in the older **Daredevil** issues he did a few years back, particularly the pre Elektra issues.

An artist's current output directly affects the back issue market prices for his work. Keep this in mind especially when you have been holding on to some books, wondering when would be a good time to sell.

CF

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MIKE BENTON is the author of *Comic Book Collecting for Fun and Profit* (Crown Publishers, $8.95). Now available at your local bookstore or comic book specialty shop

LOOKING BACK ON THE GOLDEN AGE

BY ROY THOMAS

"World War Two."

Like, number two in a series. Collect 'em all.

Lord, I hope not. With twenty to forty million dead, mankind can't really afford that kind of hobby.

Still, the grotesque world event which ended with Japan's unconditional surrender on September 2, 1945—and which began either in September 1939 or December 1941, depending on how ethnocentric you want to be—just happened to coincide with an admittedly minor event which is more happily remembered.

We oldsters call it, sometimes more with affection than with strict accuracy—The Golden Age of Comic Books.

Remember those ads for the MGM *That's Entertainment!* movie musical compilation: "Boy, do we need it now!"?

Well, that's just how some typical American boy must have felt that spring day in 1938—with the Great Depression a seemingly permanent fixture in his young life and with wars and rumors of war keeping the grownups irritable—he raced down to the corner candystore to pick up some new comic book featuring cowboys, detectives, FBI agents, slapstick humor, whatever—

—and was visually assaulted by the cover of **Action Comics**, on which this guy dressed in a red-and-blue acrobat outfit held a car over his head, preparatory to hurling it into a pile of rocks!

Now *that* was something a boy could really sink his teeth into! (Some girls did, too. But they were greatly in the minority, even then.)

ARRIVAL OF THE SUPERHEROES

With the swift success of Siegel and Shuster's creation, the comics field was soon inundated by guys with capes and chest symbols and girlfriends who didn't much care for them when they weren't wearing their tight pants.

Some of the earliest heroes, such as DC's Crimson Avenger and Sandman—and the Clock, who predated even Superman, over in **Funny Pages**—wore basically civilian clothes plus masks. These fellas were more closely related to pulp magazine and radio heroes such as The Shadow and The Green Hornet than to Superman.

Soon, though, Bob Kane's 1939 creation, The Batman, proved that even a guy without extra powers could become a star *if* he donned garb more in a Superman mode.

In Europe and Asia, too, events were proceeding at a fast clip.

The Batman made his debut in **Detective Comics** 27 only a few months before the German invasion of Poland in September 1939.

The Human Torch and The Sub-Mariner erupted onto the scene in **Marvel Comics** 1 around the time Germany and Russia signed a non-aggression pact—thus making the start of war in Europe imminent. (Well, actually, hostilities held off for a whole week!)

And then there was war.

America wasn't really in it for the first couple of years, if you don't count U.S. casualties from German subs as we pursued an increasingly un-neutral neutrality, eventually supplying Great Britain with "all aid short of war."

But back home, Hollywood movies were seldom "neutral in spirit" when they could get away with it.

And neither were the New York-based comic books.

TAKING SIDES

At first, the sides-taking of the superheroes was thinly disguised, because of our official policy of neutrality.

For instance, when Superman faced his first armies in '38, it was to deal with "a war going on in a small South American republic, San Monte." (How he settled it, I'll tell you next time!)

After war was declared on Hitler's Reich by Britain and France, though, Germans and Japanese began to turn up as "the bad guys" in Superman stories, if only in pseudonymous form.

NO.11
JUNE—JULY
ALL STAR Comics
10¢
THE JUSTICE SOCIETY JOINS THE WAR ON JAPAN!
ANOTHER BOOK-LENGTH ADVENTURE
FEATURING
HAWKMAN · THE ATOM · DR. FATE · SANDMAN · DR. MIDNITE
THE SPECTRE · STARMAN · JOHNNY THUNDER · WONDER WOMAN!

For instance, the foreign athletes at a "Dukalian"-American Sports Festival in Metropolis goosestepped and gave Nazi-style salutes, and their consul (Karl Wolff) declared: "We Dukalians are superior to any other race or nation—proof that we are entitled to be masters of America."

Somehow, I doubt if anybody thought Herr Wolff was just off the boat from Switzerland.

And occasionally, the comics *were* neutral, or at least even-handedly anti-European.

For instance, in a pre-Justice Society issue of **All-Star Comics**, the hero Ultra-Man, in the year 2240, halted a war between the "Toutonians" (an obvious standin for the Teutonic Germans) and the "Balkanians"—by proving that war was being fomented by the effete ambassador of "Sylvania."

Just in case it was unclear that Sylvania was supposed to represent Great Britain, the nation which some believed had dragged us into World War One to pull its own chestnuts out of the fire, the Sylvanian ambassador's *name* was a little less than subtle.

THE INVADERS
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
THE GREATEST SUPERHEROES OF WORLD WAR TWO!
35¢
THE INVADERS
SENSATIONAL ALL-NEW ADVENTURES!
THE FIRST FAMILIES TEAM UP WITH THE HUMAN TORCH AND THE SUB-MARINER!
67
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SUPERHEROES AND WORLD WAR II— THERE IS A STRONG CONNECTION!

The name? "Lord Criket."

Most of the other mystery men, too, were officially neutral until the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, plunged the U.S. into war with Japan, Germany and Italy.

Then all hell broke loose.

During 1940-41, even after France had fallen and England and Russia and China were being hardpressed by the Axis juggernauts, comics heroes had been conducting "business as usual" against criminals and oft-unidentified saboteurs.

Now, those same heroes were locked in do-or-die combat with the enemy hordes, or else were mopping the latter up with one hand tied behind their capes.

A look at some DC comics covers for 1942 will tell the story:

Two very surprised German U-boaters gaping through their periscope—to see Superman hurtling through the water straight toward them, blood in his eye!

Hawkman swinging his mace at a 5 foot 2 inch Japanese soldier, whose inevitable eyeglasses go flying

LOOKING BACK ON THE
GOLDEN AGE

while the other members of the Justice Society look on approvingly.

The Green Lantern and his cab-driver sidekick Doiby Dickles joining the army—even if GL had to sign up as Alan Scott.

Green Arrow and Speedy setting "traps for Japs" on a **More Fun Comics** cover—while, that same month, Simon and Kirby's Manhunter, harpoon in hand, stalks Nazi U-boats in an **Adventure Comics** cover story called "Cobras of the Deep."

And DC Comics was far from the most jingoistic of the comics publishers! For only about half its covers in any given month featured overtly war-oriented themes—while over at Timely/Marvel Comics, Axis baddies were the staple foe of The Human Torch, The Sub-Mariner and the super-patriot of them all, Captain America.

None of this, incidentally, is intended to condemn any comics publisher, past or present. They were far more under the influence of the understandable U.S. propaganda mill than they were its molders. For all their bad taste in certain racial areas, they were never much better or worse than the American public at large, a point worth recalling throughout this series.

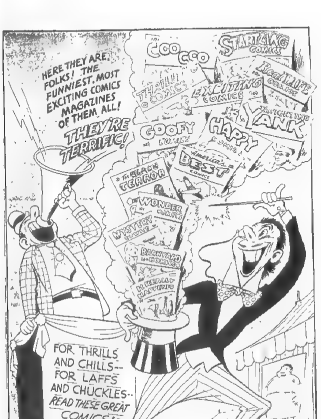
BACK TO CRIMEFIGHTING

Still, Hollywood discovered, after a spate of post-Pearl war movies had laid a bomb in '42, that what its audience really wanted was *escape*. The war was always a presence in the films of the early '40s, but the tendency was toward Home Front activities (**Since You Went Away**) or morale-boosting musicals (**This Is the Army**) or toward just plain ignoring the war altogether.

The experience of the comics paralleled that of the cinema.

By 1943, the war had been pushed into the background in many comics.

For instance, The Justice Society, in the first flush of war fever, had declared they'd fight the Axis under the


HERE THEY ARE, FOLKS! THE FUNNIEST, MOST EXCITING COMICS OF THEM ALL!
THEY'RE TERRIFIC!
COO COO COMICS
SLAMBANG COMICS
EXCITING COMICS
GOOFY COMICS
HAPPY COMICS
ANNY COMICS
BEAST COMICS
FOR THRILLS AND CHILLS-- FOR LAFFS AND CHUCKLES-- READ THESE GREAT COMICS! 10¢ At all stands

name Justice *Batallion* "for the duration." Yet by **All-Star Comics** 19 in late 1943 it had already been over half a year since they'd used that name, and indeed they never would again.

And of the eight monthly DC titles advertised therein, only one—**Star Spangled Comics**, starring Simon and Kirby's Newsboy Legion—was war-related. That cover showed The Guardian and his boy buddies tackling a whole battleship full of Japanese. It looked like they were winning.

In the comics of some other companies, of course, the war stories kept coming for the rest of the war, and in some cases even beyond. At Timely/Marvel in particular, Alex Schomberg turned out fantastically-detailed covers featuring thousands of Axis troops and carefully-labeled death rays, well into 1946.

But the trend from 1943 on was back toward crimefighting, even though a major factor in the comics' wartime success was the boredom of Stateside draftees, who found comics a cheap and easy read.

Then came the war's end, and the quick collapse.

America's dismantling of its war machine after autumn 1945 has been described as a "route," despite Occupation troops left in Europe and the Pacific. The draftees (and their Congressmen) figured the war was over, so what were all these guys in uniform doing so far away from voting booths?

With the return of millions to civilian life and presumably more adult reading fare, the superhero went into a decline.

By the late '40s, crime, cowboys, humor and other subject matter were carving an ever-greater share of the comics market. By 1949 Captain America and company bit the dust for a time, being replaced by crime comics and the predecessors of the horror comics which would make the field infamous in the coming decade.

In late 1950, even **All-Star Comics**, where no less than seven once-major heroes had shared cameraderie and adventure, was superseded by **All-Star Western**.

By 1953 Fawcett could no longer keep the Marvel Family flying, especially with a lawsuit from Superman still keeping pace overhead, and left the comics business entirely.

It's symbolic, perhaps, that of all the great Quality Comics Group heroes created by Will Eisner, Jerry Iger and others during the 1940s—Plastic Man, Doll Man, Uncle Sam, etc.—the only one DC kept alive when it bought the company out in the mid-'50s was Blackhawk. He was a non-super powered hero whose post-war peacekeeping duties were now replaced by anti-crime and anti-monster activities to which he and his flyboy brigade were illsuited.

Only Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman, over at DC, continued publication uninterrupted during the decade that followed—they, and a few second bananas such as Green Arrow and Aquaman, who survived mostly by being relatively obscure backup features in comics spearheaded by Superboy.

And no other superheroes could be seen anywhere else!

Thus, it could be truly said that the superhero was a great beneficiary of World War Two—both the temper of the times, and of men in uniform with some loose change in their pockets.

And he was also, in a very real sense, the final casualty of that war.

THE SUMMARY OVER, IT'S DOWN TO BUSINESS WITH SUPERMAN—MAN OF STEEL, TIGER OF PAPER!

Roy Thomas writes/edits comic books for DC and First Comics. He is the former editor-in-chief of Marvel Comics, having written virtually every Marvel character. Among his various creations are The Invaders, a superhero team including The Sub-Mariner, Captain America and The Human Torch, and The Liberty Legion, composed of a bunch of Timely secondstringers, for Marvel; Captain Marvel and The All-Star Squadron, consisting of virtually every DC and Quality superhero of the Golden Age, for DC. Earlier this year he initiated DC's current Secret Origins *series and First Comics* Alter-Ego.

Games

BY STEVE PERRIN

In the year-and-a-half I have been writing this column, I have mostly stuck to the games whose focus is closest to the traditional four-color comics. I think most of this magazine's readers are familiar with. Thus, I do a lot on **Champions**, **Villains and Vigilantes**, **Superworld**, **DC Heroes** and **Marvel Superheroes**, and touch on such games as **Elfquest** and the two versions of **Dr. Who**. I have reviewed whatever seemed to fit into the comics motif.

However, there is a lot more to games than superheroes and comic book spinoffs. I think that, like me, many of you out there would find a lot of the other games interesting. They fulfill the same need that comics do for us all -- the need to live vicariously in alternate fantasy worlds!

The term *fantasy world* is slightly misleading in these days of sword-and-sorcery epics labeled fantasy. In fact a fantasy is simply a made up story; something that didn't happen, or hasn't happened or never could happen. In short, any fiction -- from John Cheever to Roger Zelazny -- is fantasy.

Part of the attraction of comic book fiction of the superhero variety is that it deals with a world that could be ours -- except that people in garish longjohns are performing feats that make physics teachers weep. However, all fantasy worlds are interesting both for how close they are to our own worlds and for their differences from our own world.

The attraction of most games, board games as well as role playing, is that the player not only gets to read about interesting alternate worlds, he gets to *participate* in them. The role player is sort of like the Sunday ballplayer who signs up for a week at a sports camp. For the week, he can actually be out there pitching and hitting and running the bases instead of just watching the action on tv.

Games provide almost the same outlet. The player doesn't get to feel the armor riding on his body and the breeze of the sword blade as it slices past his chin -- but perhaps that is just as well. Going out to battle injustice and win the loot with your trusty sword is likely to be a bit more deadly than trying to beat out a bunt. Better to leave the combat decisions to the roll of the dice.

So, our intrepid gamers are attempting to vicariously live the adventures they read about. What adventures are available?

Looking for space adventure? Game Designers Workshop's **Traveller** is the grandaddy of the space games and probably the most commonly played today. Other star-traveling games include the aptly named **Space Opera** from Fantasy Games Unlimited, **Space Frontiers** from TSR Inc. and assorted licensed games such as Chaosium's **Ringworld** and FASA's **Star Trek**.

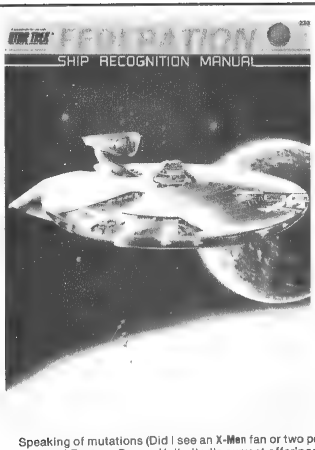
Futuristic Adventure on a more earthly scale is available from several sources. One favorite (for reasons which totally escape me) is the Post-Holocaust game. These include FGU's **Aftermath**, GDW's **Twilight 2000** and TSR's **Gamma World**.

On a less cataclysmic scale (for the Earth, if not for some of its inhabitants), is West End Games' darkly comic **Paranoia**. The players portray clones living in an underground warren whose sole authority is the computer (played by the gamemaster, of course). Unfortunately, the computer is crazy.

To doubt the computer is treason. A number of other things are treasonous according to the computer. Being a member of a secret society is treasonous. Player characters are given membership in a secret society as part of the creation process. Being a mutant is treasonous. Player characters are given mutations as part of the creation process. Needless to say, the main objective of the player character is to stay alive. However, since one of the best ways to stay alive is to convince the computer that a comrade (another player character) is more treasonous than you, it is very hard to stay alive. This is why player characters are clones. The gamer keeps having to activate another clone to continue playing whatever adventure is going on. The actual mission of the player characters (all of whom are trouble shooters for the computer) is often left in the dust as they desperately scheme to divert suspicion to each other.

Just keep the main commandments of the game in mind at all times: *Stay Alert! Trust No One! Keep Your Laser Handy!*

EXPLORING THE GENRES



Speaking of mutations (Did I see an **X-Men** fan or two perk up?) one of Fantasy Games Unlimited's current offerings is **Psi World**, a game which postulates a fantastic world of the not-too-distant future in which psionic powers are more common. Various government and private agencies are starting to take repressive measures against the burgeoning population of "mutant mind readers." I'll be reviewing some material from this game shortly

If people want a better view of some of these games, or their counterparts in the world of spies, cowboys, sword-and-sorcery or medieval cultures, let me know care of **COMICS FEATURE**. This magazine gets little enough mail, let's give the editor something to do with his letter column.

STAR TREK —— GRADUATION EXERCISE

Speaking of the FASA **Star Trek** game, a recent release provides an interesting puzzle for the role player, and a new point-of-view for the Star Trek afficianado. As the title indicates, the adventure is a graduation exercise. The prospective Academy graduate must pass this exercise or his four years of training are for nothing.

The new point-of-view is that this is the Klingon Imperial Academy. In tyical Klingon fashion, the cadet must successfully complete a life-and-death mission, or be forever disgraced (if not dead!).

The cadets must contend with a Master of Cadets noted for his cruelty, the crew of their transport ship which was due for leave until they were suddenly assigned this duty, a search on an ice planet for an alien intelligence operative who needs to be picked up after a dangerous assignment and the unexpected complication of a Romulan base on the planet. What's more, the Master of Cadets has his own secrets – some of which have to do with information discovered by the intelligence operative.

The only fault with this adventure is that its parts are a bit too scattered. The hostile ship crew has little to do with the rest of the scenario, and the potential confrontations are not well fleshed out. Similarly, the cadets must spend days on a space station waiting for their transportation, and have series of encounters that the Gamemaster must do an unseemly amount of work to make complete. Finally, while there is potential conflict betweeen the object of the mission and the Master of Cadets, just what the antagonists do when they confront each other is again left up to the Gamemaster. This is not an enviable position for a beginning Gamemaster.

STAR TREK,—FEDERATION SHIP RECOGNITION MANUAL, KLINGON SHIP RECOGNITION MANUAL, ROMULAN SHIP RECOGNITION MANUAL

For fans of Star Trek who want more variations on the Federation's naval vessels and their antagonists among the Klingons and Romulans, these three books should be very welcome, even if they never play the game. Besides authorized technical details of the cruisers, destroyers, frigates and transports, the books give histories of the various ship classes. This gives interesting glimpses into the relations between the three spacefaring nations.

The format is a briefing manual – similar to those issued for airplanes or ships by any military force in the world we know. All are supposed to be issued by Starfleet Command. The Federation book is a complete listing of ships and their current stations, while the Klingon and Romulan books take a more tentative stance in the information – complete with reliability codes as to the information provided. Writer Forest G. Brown has obviously had a lot of experience with this form of military manual – he apes the style perfectly.

STAR TREK—SHIP CONSTRUCTION MANUAL

On the other hand, this manual for construction of ships leaves the non-player out in the cold. There is no way someone without the rules or the new **Star Trek III Starship Combat Role Playing Game**, could figure out what is going on with this book.

The development of the technologies of weaponry and starship engines in this book are interesting to anyone with (1) a technical turn of mind and (2) interest in the *fantasy world* of Star Trek

BATTLETECH—THE FOX'S TEETH and TALES OF THE BLACK WIDOW COMPANY

Then again, let's look at another fantasy world, this one wholly created by the good folk at FASA. A while back I reviewed the **Battledroids** game and somewhat more recently mentioned that pressure from Lucasfilm forced them to change their name to **Battletech**. Now I have their first two supplements in front of me, and we can see how what is basically a *tank game with legs* has progressed.

These books have some slices of the history of the rather gloomy universe of the Inner Sphere. And a lot of scenarios featuring various matchups of the featured battlemechs against opponents of varying levels of competence!

There is no real role playing here, though the entertaining introductions to the engagements are done from the viewpoints of participants on one side or the other of the battles. Also, the opening pages give personal histories of all the members of the company. I suppose one could play each robot in a confrontation according to how the pilot would act, but there is no reward for so doing. Mostly, these are two-player games where each has a list of robots and a tactical objective.

The main problem with **Battletech** is that it does not evoke the spirit of the Japanese combat robot films. In creating their own universe for their robots (even though they use pictures of **Macross** robots almost exclusively throughout the game), they withdraw from their sources. The warmth and variety of effects found in even the most juvenile of the Japanese crime films is missing. If you just want to see robots pound each other on a scarred battlefield, this game and its supplements are for you. Otherwise, give it a miss.

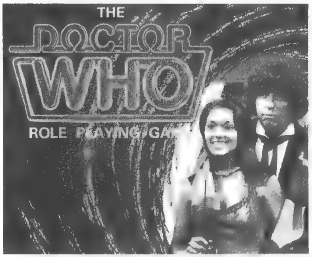
DR. WHO —— THE HARTLEWICK HORROR

FASA again, this time with a supplement to the **Dr. Who** game.

In this case, we have a combination of the good Doctor or one of his fellow Time Lords (one is provided, with two companions, if the players don't have any ready at hand.) versus a monster which seems to be left over from H.P. Lovecraft. One wonders if the author isn't a fan of Chaosium's **Call of Cthulhu**.

The villain is one of the last of the ancient Elderand race of ameboid mentalists. The Elderands were pacifistic, but this is a criminal who was exiled to earth many centuries ago. The setting is 1923 rural England–just the place for mysterious strangers, noises in the night and strange lights in the old Druid mound.

This looks good, with plenty of opportunity for role playing and confronting an eldritch enemy with A LOT OF POWERS. Players of **Call of Cthulhu** or FGU's **Daredevils** or Pacesetter's **Chill** might like to have a go at this one which could be easily adapted to any of those games. The Gamemaster might have some fun with a Time Lord and companions wandering about while the player characters are doing what they can.



DR. WHO —— THE DALEKS

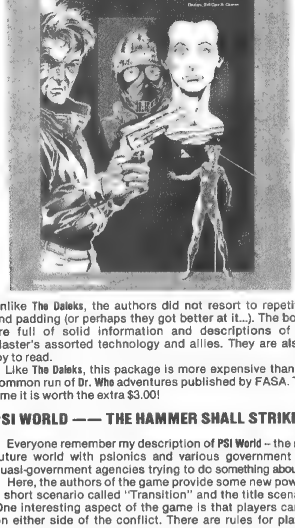
This is information with little adventure. It tries to tell all about the Daleks. I think it may have succeeded. In fact, it does the job too well.

The package is actually two books. One is **The Dalek Problem -- A Symposium**, which purports to be a CIA (Celestial Intervention Agency) manual for Time Lords working for that worthy, if clandestine, organization. It gives the player all the information a Time Lord could be expected to have about the common menace. The other book, which rates a color cover and the title **The Daleks**, has all the real information. It is different from the official version.

The main problem I find with this set is that it continually repeats itself. I have read the early history of the Daleks about six times in different segments of the two books. This is not completeness, it is redundancy and padding. Considering the realities of printing (it is good to print things in sets of 8 pages, it is better to print them in sets of 16 pages), FASA would have done better to shrink the symposium to 16 pages and the main book to 32 pages. They would have saved money and been able to provide this overstuffed package for the same price as the **Hartlewick Horror**, instead of $3.00 more.

DR. WHO —— THE MASTER

Like **The Daleks**, this package has two books containing the official and the "real" history and background on the Master, Dr. Who's greatest and most consistent enemy.



Unlike **The Daleks**, the authors did not resort to repetition and padding (or perhaps they got better at it...). The books are full of solid information and descriptions of the Master's assorted technology and allies. They are also a joy to read.

Like **The Daleks**, this package is more expensive than the common run of **Dr. Who** adventures published by FASA. This time it is worth the extra $3.00!

PSI WORLD —— THE HAMMER SHALL STRIKE

Everyone remember my description of **PSI World** -- the near future world with psionics and various government and quasi-government agencies trying to do something about it?

Here, the authors of the game provide some new powers, a short scenario called "Transition" and the title scenario. One interesting aspect of the game is that players can be on either side of the conflict. There are rules for playing members of the 'PPA (the Psionic Police Authority), the Enclave (an above-board group of peaceful psionics who are devoted to mutual aid), psionic revolutionaries ("We really are the master race!") or hidden psionics (who don't trust the government to keep its hands off of the Enclave). Any of these organizations can be involved in the scenarios presented. Each investigation has layers that need to be unpeeled page-by-page until all is revealed.

Quite frankly, I have never read the rules for **Psi World**, so I cannot recommend the game system. However, these scenarios can be adapted to other use–and they are sufficiently interesting to make me want to read the game rules.

VILLAINS AND VIGILANTES

I like FGU's **Villains and Vigilantes** adventures. They are very adaptable to the superhero games I play, and they have the virtue of coming out. While other publishers strain to put out a supplement every three months, FGU releases an average of one a month and sometimes more.

This particular book is a good one for any superhero gamers who find themselves with just two players. It contains three unrelated mini-adventures for one here. Each involves detective work and a bit of fistplay. The authors even give a summary of the playtest of each scenario, offering a benchmark of achievement (the playtest heroes were not fully successful in all cases) for the next hero to try himself against.

This is a good step in superhero role playing. Too often games are devoted to team activities. That is really all a Gamemaster can do when he is facing a half dozen anxious players. This book provides a relief for those times when you brave the blizzard to get to the meeting place because you know the half-dozen are expecting you and find that the only player is the owner of the meeting place! **CF**

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Superworld, Ringworld and **Elfquest**, Chaosium, Inc., P.O. Box 6302, Albany, CA 94706

Villains and Vigilantes, Space Opera, Aftermath and **Psi World**, Fantasy Games Unlimited, P.O. Box 182, Roslyn, NY 11576

Champions, Hero Games, 92A 21st Ave., San Mateo, CA 94402

DC Heroes, Mayfair Games, Inc., P.O. Box 48539, Niles, IL 60648-0539

MARVEL SUPER HEROES AND **Star Frontiers**, TSR Inc., P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva, WI 53147

Star Trek, Battletech, and **Dr. Who**, FASA Corporation, P.O. Box 6930, Chicago, IL 60680

STEVE PERRIN CREATED BOTH THE ELFQUEST *AND* SUPERWORLD *GAMES ALONG WITH MANY OTHER ITEMS.*

It started with five young mutants over two decades ago. This unheralded, secondary team, stars of a minor title that suffered cancellation on one occasion, became the nucleus for the most popular heroes in the Marvel Universe. In fact you could almost call the X-Men, New Mutants, Fallen Angels, X-Factor, Firestar and all the myriad others...

MARVEL'S MUTANT UNIVERSE

BY JAMES VAN HISE

Mutants are big in comic books. But they are *only* big in comic books. Everyone who reads comic books knows what a mutant is. But outside of comics. Only the scientifically informed know what it means. Two different science fiction films were planning releases under the title **Mutant** but both changed them. Their research showed that the average person has no idea what a mutant is. The byword mutants are the rage of the comics world, an overnight success twenty-five years in the making!

Sci fi films have dealt with atomic mutations since the Fifties. Marvel comics was born from the premise that not only didn't a little radiation ever hurt anyone but it in fact enhanced career opportunities. The Hulk owes his creation to Gamma Rays, the Fantastic Four to cosmic radiation bombardment and Spider-man to the bite of a radioactive spider. But while these heroes are often referred to as being the result of atomic mutation, the X-Men were in fact the true Marvel mutants. They were born with their abilities, even if their powers did not manifest themselves for some years. Mutants possess one or more inherent characteristics not found in their parents. That is why Franklin Richards (the son of Reed and Sue Richards of the FF) is indeed a mutant while his parents are not.

When the original X-men were created, the concept behind them was fresh (mutants secretly searching for other mutants) but the characters needed definition. Scott Summers (Cyc lops) was introduced as "Slim" Summers. Prof. X was the brain of the group, a wheelchair-bound Reed Richards. The Beast was just another version of The Thing (until he was given an intellect and a wide vocabulary a couple issues later). Ice Man 's powers were the opposite of the Human Torch, but his teenage personality was the same. Marvel Girl was a cutout patterned after the Invisible Girl. Marvel was ripping off their own previous success.

After a few issues they can be more clearly defined. A background in which the X-men lived and fought was explored. This began to make them very different from the high profile FF. Magneto was obviously to the X-Men what Dr. Doom was to the FF, but he was unusual in his own way. More oddball mutants were introduced as was the concept of the Sentinels, the super robots who would return to bedevil the X-Men time after time.

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The original **X-Men** climaxed on a high note in 1969 with issues 56-65. All but one of these was drawn by Neal Adams and Tom Palmer and written by Roy Thomas (**COMICS FEATURE**'s newest columnist!)

Nine months later the title returned but it only featured reprints from '67 through issue 93. Then it didn't appear for three months. When it returned again it had new X-Men (picking up from **Giant Size X-Men** 1 which was published in the interim between issues 93 and 94). This is when the modern age of Marvel mutants began. With the forthcoming **Classic X-Men** series beginning this summer, anyone who missed those early days will be able to read enhanced reprints of the New X-Men beginning with their origin.

Which brings us up to today's **X-Men, New Mutants, Firestar, The Misfits** (a title change is planned for this one) and the controversial **X-Factor**!

FIRST: THE NEW X-MEN

The **X-Men** was Marvel's first mutant title of the modern age. It remains the hub around which all others revolve. This title sets the pace for the other books, particularly since Chris Claremont writes both **The X-Men and The New Mutants**. For this reason, the status of the X-Men and their relationship with the rest of humanity remains consistent.

"The X-Men are very much a secret team. That's one of their key elements," states Claremont. "They do all of their work in the gray shadows on the fringe of society. They're unsung heroes, more outlaw than not, in the tradition of pulp fiction."

But this doesn't mean that the book hasn't gone through growth and change over the past decade.

"They're much better written now," Claremont asserts. "You can look at the book the way it was written then, the way the characters were written then, and hopefully see some fundamental changes. Certainly in Wolverine and Storm. Kitty Pryde has changed since we introduced her. Nightcrawler has changed somewhat. Magneto has changed about as much as you can change. My hope is that if you pick up the **X-Men** in ten years-and I assume that 'I'm still writing it -- that there's a fair chance you wouldn't even see the same characters any more. Those current characters who are still existing will have changed even more. They will have grown as people grow over the course of their lives.

"I think that's the critical element in any long-running narrative structure," Claremont continues. "There has to be an evolution. If they stay the same then what's the point? Some people might find that sameness comforting, but I find it dull. I'm all for growth, change and evolution!"

Claremont cites Spider-Man, one of Marvel's longest running characters as an example. "I don't want Spider-Man to be the same today as he was twenty-five years ago. I think that would be a mistake. That would mean that all he's been through in those hundreds of stories meant nothing to him -- they had no effect on him. It has nothing to do with the passage of chronological time, it has to do with experience. I can't go through the things these characters go through regularly and not have thousands of emotional and psychological resonances.

"The problem with DC for so long," Claremont observes, "was that their characters never changed. Superman emerged unscathed emotionally from every encounter and every conflict. The wealth of psychological depths that you could go through is extraordinary."

"He was the sole survivor of his race, a god-like being stuck on a planet of physical and mental inferiors. He could rule this world! Yet he chooses to be a defender. Why? He chooses to deliberately downplay his appearance and his power so as to blend in to our society. Why? What are we to him? Pets? Does he wish he was like us? The more you sit there and think about who Superman is and why he is and where he comes from, the more fascinating it is. As a writer, I wish people would explore it."

A massive change recently reflected in both **The X-Men** and **The New Mutants** was when Magneto, the original X-Men's oldest foe, reformed and took over the position formerly occupied by Professor X (who is now off in space with Star Jammers).

"Times change," says Claremont, repeating his theme. "In our own world 35 years ago, Menachim Begin was a terrorist in the eyes of the British government. Now, before he retired, he was the Prime Minister of Israel -- respected in the Western world. Ten years ago the Vietnamese were our bitter enemies. Who knows what they'll be ten years from now. Anything is possible."

What Claremont does not see as possible is the return of Prof. X to the **X-Men**. "Not if I can help it," the writer stresses. "That would defeat the purpose of having Magneto as the head of the school. At this stage he's with the Star Jammers. Assuming I ever find an

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THE BOOK THAT STARTED IT ALL—AGAIN!

artist, we will some day do a Star Jammers mini-series."

Easily the most popular X-Man is Wolverine. His background is cloaked in mystery although some details have been filled in recently in the Bill Mantlo scripted **Alpha Flight**. But Claremont is quick to point out that just because those events are chronicled in **Alpha Flight**, that doesn't necessarily make them part of Wolverine's origin.

"It's not really an origin of Wolverine -- it's the first meeting between Wolverine and the Hudsons. My own feeling is that, unless something is established by the omnipotent narrator (in captions rather than in dialogue) it isn't necessarily so. What you saw in those two issues, as I recall, is Heather Hudson's interpretation of scraps of data that she gathered from her husband.

"She has taken bits of a puzzle, put them together and come to a conclusion that Wolverine somehow got his bones from Deathstrike or Deathstrike's father and that Hudson was somehow involved in it. That's her interpretation. For all we know she could be wrong. Wolverine doesn't know what happened and says over and over again that he doesn't care. It happened a long time ago.

"I said, unless a fact is stated by the omnipotent narrator, it is mutable and subject to change. While I respect what Bill has done, I don't consider myself especially bound by it. I am bound in the sense that that is the tale of what happened when Wolverine met the Hudsons. Those events are true. What happened before that is anybody's guess. We haven't actually seen it -- we've only heard people tell about it and people lie all the time."

Claremont has a very good reason for keeping the origin of Wolverine cloaked in mystery for all these years and for not delving into it in the pages of the **X-Men**.

"Magneto and Wolverine are characters the less we know about, the better, I would like to preserve as much of an air of mystery about them as I can. As a reader, that was what I liked. I wanted to know about the characters who intrigued me but not so much that there was nothing left for me to play with in my own imagination."

Plans for **The X-Men** aside from this year's annual which will once again be drawn by Art Adams, include a pivotal plotline involving Rachel/Phoenix.

"Rachel is getting to be a confused character," editor Ann Nocenti explains. "We're going to do some things to help solidify who she is. As a result, some of the X-Men are going to leave the team for awhile. Plus we'll be bringing back an old member.

"We have a lot of big cosmic stories planned for them!"

The Rachel plotline takes on a stronger tone in issue 207, tentatively titled "Ghosts." This plays off Rachel's confrontation with The Beyonder in 203 when she tapped into Wolverine's lifeforce against his will. The repercussions of Wolverine's smoldering resentment over this incident unfold with dramatic results.

BACK AGAIN FOR THE FIRST TIME: THE CLASSIC X-MEN

One of the biggest announcements of the year is the planned open-ended reprint series featuring the new X-Men as well as new backup material.

"The first issue will cover **Giant Size** number one but will only reprint 13 page of it," Claremont reveals. "The bulk of the first issue will explore what happened on the night between the end of **Giant-Size X-Men** 1 and **X-Men** 94. Why did some of the original X-Men decide to leave? Why did the new ones decide to stay? There were things hinted at in 94 that we never got around to exploring."

"In **Classic** 2 we'll be showing the beginning of the friendship between Storm and Jean Grey, which we alluded to in **X-Men** 100.

"Tentatively for Issue 3 we're covering the burial of Thunderbird -- who he was and why he did what he did.

"It can relate to something happening in the story or it could relate to something happening in a parallel time stream, setting up the New Mutants or where the Star Jammers came from. The backup is essentially whatever we want to make of it that will add to the published accounts."

Strong fan demand is expected for this book featuring the most popular characters in the comic book world today. The monthly series will begin appearing this summer.

THEN CAME— THE NEW MUTANTS

The New Mutants appeared first in a graphic novel written by Chris Claremont which led immediately into their own regular series. The New Mutants are teenagers who operate independantly of the X-Men even though both work under the supervision of Magneto.

In **Secret Wars II**, an intensely dramatic occurance had a different effect on the two mutant groups. For a time most of

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The New Mutants ceased to exist! The way the two groups reacted to the Beyonder and how he made them perceive reality, points up the emotional and philosophical differences between the two groups. **The New Mutants** is composed essentially of children whose worldview is not as tempered by hardening experiences as that of the X-Men.

"In the comic book world, where people are destroyed and resurrected with appalling frequency, we're trying to deal with the repercussions," Ann Nocenti explains. "What we did was sit down and try to figure out how you'd feel if such a thing were to happen. We started with throwing them into shock. It's not something that anyone's world view can accept. I cannot accept that a teenager could accept the reality of dying and being resurrected. They'd have to put what they went through into their subconscious as if it didn't happen.

"We took each character and used the situation to analyze how they would have dealt with it," Nocenti continues. "We dealt with how Bobby wasn't even called -- wasn't even a part of it, and that's going to have repercussions. He can no longer go through day-to-day existence without knowing that this horrible thing can happen. He became obsessed with the idea. Some of the others were able to say,'Well, just another adventure!'"

Thr X-Men dealt with the existence of the Beyonder differently.

"Storm is a fairly evolved creature. She's close to a force of nature, or was at one point," Nocenti adds. "She's evolved enough that she can deal with the concept of The Beyonder Wolverine's tough enough, Kitty may still be young enough to deal with it. The only X-Man who really freaked out was Nightcrawler because he believes in the Christian god. It's like the rug was pulled out from under his reality."

As the writer of both **X-Men** and **New Mutants**, Chris Claremont was able to handle how each group member individually dealt with the aftermath of the Beyonder. Since **The New Mutants** were the more profoundly affected, it has been dealt with more in their book.

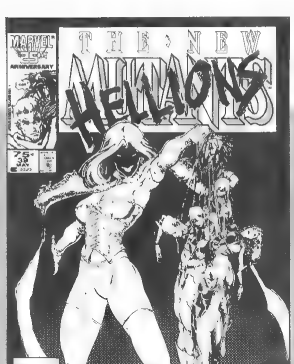
"The next few issues deal quite extensively with it," Claremont states. "The final issue of the White Queen trilogy wraps up the immediate repercussions. There's also a Mirage solo story which relates to it. It's an aspect of their lives that will be a part of them. It won't be a pre-eminent part once we get past the main storyline. By the same token, it is an aspect that will never be far away. They'll always be aware of it. It'll affect them in small ways, subconsciously. It might become a big deal depending on the demands of the story."

Plans are already afoot for the anniversary in issue 50. This will be the climactic tale of Warlock which previous stories have been leading up to.

"This is tentatively set as the final, major confrontation between Warlock and his father, which will possibly be preceded by a chase through time and space," Claremont reveals. "There will be an interesting number of adventures along the way."

On the flipside, editor Ann Nocenti states that **The New Mutants** will reflect the fact that this is a group of young teenagers, not adventurous adults.

"They are going to become more what their real ages are and what their real experiences are," says Nocenti about the group of young mutants. "You'll be seeing a lot more stories like 'Slumber Party' where the adventure or the action of the story is going to be born out of something kids actually do. It's a little strange to have them continually off on huge adventures. We'll leave that kind of thing to the X-Men."



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NEW, YET OLD: X—FACTOR

Ann Nocenti is not the editor of **X-Factor**. But in her position as editor of **X-Men** and **New Mutants** she was crucial in the complicated strategy necessary to launch such an ambitious reworking of the original X-Men.

"There was a certain amount of coordination needed to create a viable environment for Cyclops to leave the X-Men," she cites as just one example of the complicated elements involved. "**X-Factor** needs to establish an identity of its own—a good, solid reason for being. Once it does that, the two groups will become aware of each other. Right now all that the X-Men know is that there's this thing called X-Factor. They don't necessarily know that it's where Scott went. Even if they were to see some publicity for it, they would see that it's Scott and a redhead and think it's Scott and Madeline. They don't know that Madeline's disappeared. We're working on how we're going to build the crossover."

"The X-Men will discover Jean's resurrection," Claremont says, hinting at story possibilities. "There will be all manner of repercussions that Louise (Jones) and I are going to build to . We're not going to just jump right into it." This is because a complicated game plan is being worked out for drawing the two groups together.

"Louise and I are talking about starting a mutant gang war. This is to say that we are each creating an evil mutant mastermind and coming up with characters with similar themes to them so that the titles will turn coincidence to our advantage. For the last few years, I've been dealing with mutant paranoia. Human beings are terrified of mutants who might try to take over the world. Now we're going to introduce mutants who are actually out to do just that. If you want an analogy, what we have is a 1930 Warner Brothers crime film. Louise in **X-Factor** has the James Cagney gang and I in **X-Men** have the Humphrey Bogart gang. Magneto is going to be Pat O'Brien caught in the middle. I can't speak for Louise, but as far as the X-Men go, I plan to make this gang war as bloody as the real thing."

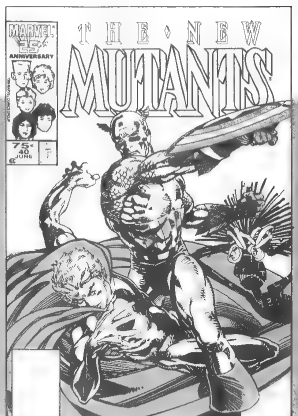
Although well-received by the fans, **X-Factor** has had a rocky time from the start. Bob Layton, one of the creators of the X-Factor concept and who was heavily involved with the writing, has been replaced by Louise Jones (recognized for her excellent work writing **Power Pack** and former editor of the mutant books). There was reportedly some behind-the-scenes dissension over revival of Jean Grey. When Dark Phoenix died, many hoped that this would not be just another typical comic book death, one where the character would be revived by some contrived means a few years later. As ingenius as the return of Jean Grey was, some felt that it was just business as usual in the unreal comic book world.

Chris Claremont was reportedly less than thrilled with **X-Factor** initially, but he has recognized the story potential available with the new team. And he is carefully working out an X-Men meets X-Factor plotline.

In the near future, Scott will tell Jean about his wife. She's not going to be very happy about it!

THEY'RE MISFITS— THE FALLEN ANGELS

The six issue **Fallen Angels** miniseries (formerly known as **The Misfits**) by Jo Duffy, Kerry Gammill and Tom Palmer is being written and drawn for a projected fall release. Complications have arisen over calling the book **The Misfits** resulting in the change of name to **Fallen Angels**.



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"The basic premise of the series," says Jo Duffy, "is that being a mutant is like being an adolescent. You hit a point in your life when your body starts changing on you in ways you never expected and you're convinced that there's nobody in the world who's ever been like you. I figured that being a mutant and an adolescent simultaneously is sort of like psychological double-jeopardy. It's a very funny age but also an age when you take yourself much more seriously than is warranted."

The team will be Sunspot, Warlock, Madox(the multiplying man), Siren and some ancillary mutant characters.

"Warlock is a very touching character, but he's also an intrinsically silly one. The Vanisher is an intrinsically silly character. These characters have got a capacity both for drama and silliness that I don't think has ever been fully explored by anybody. I wanted to give these people with all this rich story potential a chance to be stars for awhile."

The events in the mini-series will be reflected in the **New Mutants** as it will involve Sunspot and Warlock leaving the group for a time. This is when they encounter the Vanisher and an array of other characters, some a bit surprising.

"The Vanisher, because he has such a record of cowardice and incompetence," Duffy explains, "can no longer get an adult mutant to work with him. He has set himself up as a kind of Fagin for runaway gifted youngsters. We're creating two new characters for the series and also including Devil Dinosaur, Moon Boy and possibly The Impossible Man. There's going to be a travel motif in the story, but whether it will be time, space or dimensional travel, the story will determine."

The two new characters are both female. The first, named Chance, is a latent mutant who doesn't know what her abilities are yet and she's a Korean juvenile delinquent. The other new character is named Ariel. She has space-bridging abilities and a mutant power that she's had all her life but is unaware is a mutation. She is an alien but this aspect has no connection with the fact that Warlock is also alien to this planet.

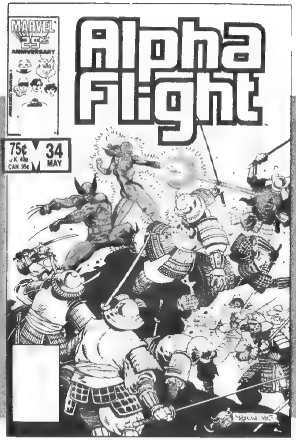
"It will be a very dark tone and light tone series," Duffy states. "I think it works best to have light and dark running alongside each other. It's going to get a lot like Shakespeare's **Twelfth Night** in that people have problems they take incredibly seriously only because they lack perspective. Unless it's an actual death or a tragedy, anything taken very seriously has a humorous side when viewed in perspective. The characters will not find the goings-on at all funny, but I hope sometimes that the audience does.

"Sunspot and Warlock are two of my favorite characters. Warlock is a toy that everybody wants to play with," says Duffy. "He epitomizes what I was talking about. The other characters are there because I was looking for a balanced team -- the kind of odd duck characters who'd never had this kind of exposure and I thought might work here."

BORN ON TV FIRESTAR

Even newer to the world of Marvel's mutants is **Firestar**, who just finished appearing in her own four-part mini-series. Written by Tom DeFalco and drawn by Mary Wilshire, this has a different slant than other Marvel titles have taken in recent years.

"Tom DeFalco came up with the idea of doing a **Firestar** mini-series based on the character who has appeared in *Spider-Man and His Amazing Friends* on tv," explains Wilshire. "It was



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something that we actually thought up a year or two ago because I expressed an interest in doing comics that would appeal more directly to little girls. We're trying to get more little girls into the readership.

"We decided that we wanted to make a story about a girl's – any girl's – struggle to grow up. Adolescence is enormously difficult. It just kind of happened that it started with this interaction between the young girl and her grandmother – trying to make her not be so afraid of her first day of school by telling her that she has a special mark on her hand. Of course it's a mark that everybody has! That's part of the gimmick, too. We want to involve everybody and have them think that maybe they're special. On the most universal level, I believe that that's the real significance of storytelling. I didn't grow up reading comic books and so my first obsession is not with comic books per se but with drawing people and telling stories—wherever there's a story that really involves peoples' emotion."

OTHER X—PROJECTS

It's been over two years since the first and only **X-Men** graphic novel appeared. It was so special and powerful that fans have been eagerly awaiting another. A second one is now in the works, to be written by Chris Claremont and painted by John Bolton. Claremont explains that he didn't want to do another graphic novel until he had just the right story for it.

"It took me the better part of three and a half years to come up with the first one. The only problem with a story as good as that one is that you want to come up with another that will be at least its equal. Anyone can do a 64 page issue of the **X-Men**. I've done it myself. The problem is to do a story in a 64 or 80 page format that justifies the six dollar price and that stands alone as a special, almost unique sort of story which could be done in this format but not in the regular book. You want very much to give the readers value for their money. Doing a story which is basically a glorified regular issue doesn't fit my criterion."

There is also a Rachel/Phoenix mini-series in the works to be written by Claremont and drawn by Rick Leonardi. In describing it, Ann Nocenti states, "It will be the odyssey of Rachel. We're going to find out who she is-strip her down, build her up and make her really into a phoenix that rises out of ashes and is a sole survivor of everything. Her origin has been confusion with the alternate timeline and all that."

Barry Smith and Chris Claremont have also been talking about doing a Storm mini-series, which Smith will be working on instead of doing occasional issues of **The X-Men**.

Besides the already discussed **X-Men** annual drawn by Art Adams, there will be a **New Mutants** annual. "It's being done by Alan Davis," informs Ann Nocenti. "Chris has taken characters from the **Longshot** stories for that. The annuals are where we can cut loose and do stories we normally wouldn't do in the regular book."

The complicated mutant world at Marvel Comics has practically become a universe unto itself, populated with characters, crossovers and interaction. To X-fans, it's a dream come true!

LETTERS

Send all comments and correspondence to:
COMICS FEATURE
8399 Topanga Canyon Blvd.
Suite 210
Canoga Park, CA 91304

Dear Hal,

You asked me to tell you waht it is that Stan Lee writes every issue that ties **Comics Feature** to Marvel.

I have **Comics Feature** from 35 up in my hand right now—It's really hard to type this way you know—and every issue I have here highlights a Marvel comics character on the cover. The January issue did have Green Lantern and Batman on the cover, but they were small compared to Spider-Man. And generally speaking, what you highlight on the cover, you highlight with special articles in the magazine. And since you started publication, how many issues of **Comics Feature** did not highlight Marvel related characters on the cover? I don't have them all here, but I'll wager there aren't a lot of them, Hal. And even if I'm wrong about that, you will certainly have to admit that during the past year **Comics Feature** has slanted toward an emphasis on Marvel characters on the covers. And since the last four issues also have Stan Lee's name plastered all over the cover, what do you suppose most readers associate you with?

They associate you with Marvel.

Hey, Marvel is what's happening. You're trying to sell magazines. And nobody is going to blame you for trying your best to appeal to the Marvel crowd. You would be crazy if you didn't do that. It's just that I'm an older fan—I can remember when Marvel was number two (and trying harder). And if I were editing and publishing a zine like **Comics Feature**, and I got the chance to get Stan Lee as a regular, you damn better believe I'd do it. Nobody blames you for that either. However, Stan Lee only more closely associates you with Marvel, and if you intend to be a general interest comics zine, this close association might be a problem. From a look at your letters pages it already is a problem.

Now I don't think Stan Lee is going out of his way to make **Comics Feature** a new branch of Marvel Comics. I've enjoyed his columns, and for guys like me they're even nostalgic. Since Stan can't seem to shake his over use of esoteric euphemisms like "Frantic One," "True Believer" and "Excelsior!," references to Irving Forbush and other good stuff done in the "Marvelous Marvel Manner." That's all a lot of fun. And Stan Lee does have something to say. The columns are generally informative. Then again, no one expects Stan Lee to talk about what a great bunch of guys the fellows at DC Comics are. Don't they deserve equal time?

In Stan Lee's last column he took a lot of credit for being the first in use of college vocabulary, realistic characterization, continued story-lines, one universe—Stan Lee says that Marvel Comics practically *trademarked* the concept of realism mixed with fantasy. And while I'm certainly not trying to take anything away from Stan Lee's accomplishments (the 1960s *did* belong to Marvel. I was reading them then myself), if I were editor of **Comics Feature** I'd have second thoughts about printing a statement like that. Stan Lee was doing some very special work back in those days. But so was Robert Kanigher at DC Comics, with the Metal Men. And wasn't The Fantastic Four a reaction to DC's Justice League of America to begin with?

I guess the only way to be really fair and square about all this is to give someone like Julius Schwartz equal time with a column of his own. And it costs money to publish magazines, and I'm sure you can't afford to do something like that. Still, the whole thing is, Hal, that you can't expect people to perceive you as middle of the road when you get someone like Stan Lee to do a regular column for the magazine.

If I were publishing a newspaper, and I claimed to be "for the best man," and then I published a regular feature by a big name Republican, how many people would believe I'm "for the best man"??

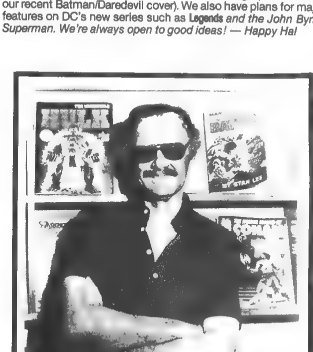
There wouldn't be a Democrat alive who would believe it.

So you see, Hal. You've got the same problem with comic book fans. All I'm saying is that no one blames you for doing what you do, but you do have to live with the fact that some fans are going to call you a Marvel oriented zine, as in my mind, you are.

Don't do away with the news section. Not everyone reads **Comic Buyer's Guide**. And you are, after all, a newsstand magazine with appeal to a larger readership. If you do anything, you should make an effort to expand your news gathering and make **Comics Feature** a real service to readers.

David Pettus
RT 1 Box 301
Loretto, TN 38469

As you no doubt have seen, Stan Lee has moved on to **Marvel Age** and we have been trying to broaden out coverage (such as with our recent Batman/Daredevil cover). We also have plans for major features on DC's new series such as **Legends** *and the John Byrne Superman. We're always open to good ideas! — Happy Ha!*



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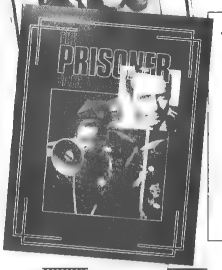

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☐**Justice League of America 254**—Conway/McDonnel/I-C by Wray (MASK insert)

☐**Hex 13**—Fleisher/Texeira/Garzon. New super-group is introduced! But are they heroes or villains?

5/13/86 SHIPPING

☐**DC Comics Presents 97**—(Phantom Zone Criminals—Last issue). Gerber/Veitch Double-length.

☐**Fury of Firestorm 51**—Conway/Brozowski/Machlan.

☐**Tales of the Teen Titans 69**—Wolfman/Garcia-Lopez/Garzon. Lilith's fate, the Titans' return to Earth, Kole's origin.

☐**Wriord Annual 5**—Fleisher/P-I by Adam Kubert/Painted Cover by Greil. Warlord is enslaved by ancient Mayans and forced to aid the invasion of the surface world.

☐**Angel Love 2**—(of 8) Barbara Slate. Angel discovers her new boyfriend's addicted to cocaine.

☐**Vigilante 33**—Kupperbert/Patton/Maygar. A rapist stalks Manhattan. Direct sales only.

☐**The Outsiders 11**—Barr/P-I by Aparo. Direct sales only.

☐**Watchmen 1**—(of 12) Moore/P-I-C by Gibbons. Direct sales only.

☐**Roots of the Swamp Thing 3**—(of 5) Wein/p-I by Wrightson. Reprint from **Swamp Thing 5** and **6**. Plus a Wein/Wrightson text piece. Direct sales only.

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☐**Batman 399**—Moench/P-I-C by Mandrake. The end of Two-Face.

☐**Superman 423**—(Last issue) Moore/Swan/Perez. The "Last Superman story!" (Story concludes in ACTION Number 583.)

☐**Star Trek 30**—Kupperberg/Infantino/Villagran/Brozoski & Smith

☐**Secret Origins 6**—Batman and Halo. 1st Thomas/Rogers/Austin 2nd-Barr/P-I-C by Giordano. Two origins each month. The Golden Age Batman and the Outsiders' Halo.

☐**'mazing Man 9**—Rozakis/deStefano/Kese.

☐**Blue Beetle 4**—Wein/Cullins/Patterson.

☐**G.I. Combat 285**—Kanigher/P-I by Glanzman/J. Kubert.

☐**Elvira's House of Mystery 7**

☐**Legion of Super-Heroes 26**—Levitz/LaRocque/DeCarlo. Battle with the Fatal Five. Direct sales only

☐**Electric Warrior 5**—Moench/P-I by Balkie. For love of a human woman, Lek 0-03 declares war on his masters, becoming the hero of society's rejects. Direct sales only.

☐**History of DC Universe 1**—(Of 3—with fold-out center-fold)Wolfman/P-C Perez. Beginning the complete history of DC, continuing from the dawn of time through World War I. Direct sales only.

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☐**Swamp Thing 52**—Moore/Veitch/Alcala/Bissette. Swamp Thing heads to Gotham City in search of Abby.

☐**Adventures of the Outsiders 37**—Barr/Davis/Neary.

☐**Green Lantern Corps 204**—Englehart/Colon/Staton and Patterson.

☐**Warlord 109**—Fleisher/P-I by Randall.

☐**Blue Devil 28**—Mishkin/Kupperberg/Collins/Cullins & Martin.

☐**Who's Who 319**

☐**Booster Gold 8**—W-P Jurgens/DeCarlo. Brainiac 5, Chameleon Boy, and Ultra Boy guest star. (1 of 2 parts) This concludes the surprising origin of Booster Gold.

☐**Super Powers 1**—(Of 4—1986 Kenner Toy tie-in) Kupperberg/Infantino/Marcos. Orion and Mr. Miracle now govern Apokolips. Plastic Man, Capt. Marvel, and Cyborg join the Super Powers team. Can they stop Tyr from freeing Darkseid?

☐**Infinity, Inc. 30**—(sequel to the JSA Special) (R & D Thomas/McFarlane/De-Zuniga) How will the Infinitors handle their grief, now that the Justice Society are gone forever? Direct sales only.

☐**The New Teen Titans 24**—Wolfman/Barreto/Tanghal. Introducing the Hybrid, a new super-group that will not only plague the Titans, but the whole DC universe. Direct sales only.

☐**The Dark Knight 4**-(Last issue) W-P by Miller/Janson & Varley. The climax of the series with Superman as guest star. Direct sales only.

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☐**Tales of the Legion of Super-Heroes 339**—Levitz/Lightle/Mahlstedt.

☐**Action 583**—(Last issue for 4 months) Moore/Swan. What's in store for Superman, his best friends and worst enemies.

☐**Detective 566**—Moench/Colan/B. Smith/Giordano.

☐**All-Star Squadron 61**—Thomas/Harris/DeZuniga. Retelling, for the first time since its original publication in the 1940s, the "secret origins" of Liberty Belle.

☐**Teen Titans Spotlight 2**'-Wolfman/Cowan/Giordano. The Hawks infiltrate the Hyathis Corp. for a rematch with the Shadow-Thief.

☐**Star Trek Annual 2**—Barr/Jurgens/B. Smith/Cowan& Villagran.

☐**DC Challenge 11**—(of 12) Wolfman/Giffen/Tanghal. If things haven't gotten odd enough, enter the Bizarros. Plus Superman, Adam Strange and everyone else. Direct sales only.

☐**Lords of the Ultra-Realm 4**—(Of 6) Moench/P-I-C by Broderick. Direct sales only.

☐**Lois Lane 2**—(Last issue) Newell/P-I-C Morrow. Lois' obsession over missing children escalates and none of her friends can help.

MARVEL COMICS

5/6/86 SHIPPING

☐**Cloak & Dagger 8**—Mantlo/Mignola/Austin.

☐**Daredevil 234**—Gruenwald/Ditko. Steve Ditko guest pencils the meeting of Daredevil and Madcap.

☐**New Mutants 43**—Claremont/Purcell/Porta-

☐**Web of Spider-Man 18**—Michelinie/Silvestri/Baker. Part 4 of the *Where is Spider-Man?* series, tying in with **Peter Parker 17** and **Amazing Spider-Man 279.**

☐**West Coast Avengers 12**—Englehart/Milgrom/Sinnott. Featuring the return of Graviton.

☐**Conan the King 36**—Kraar/Hunt/Nichols.

☐**Labyrinth: Superspecial 39**—Jacobson/J. Buscema/Tanghal. The Jim Henson movie, starring David Bowie.

☐**Swashbucklers 8**—Mantlo/Isherwood/Villamonte. The Pirates-turned Privateers must defend a swamp-infested planet from the ravaging Colonizers. Direct sales only.

☐**Fraggle Rock 18**—Kay/Severin. Last Issue.

☐**He-Man and the Masters of the Universe 3**—Carlin/Wilson/Janke Hordak traps Prince Adam in the Slime Pit and steals the Sword of Power.

☐**Peter Porker 10**—Skeates/Albelo.

5/13/86 SHIPPING

☐**Alpha Flight 38**—Mantlo/Ross/Talaoc. Guest starring Talisman and Sub-Mariner. Features the birth of Snowbird's child.

☐**Amazing Spider-Man 280**—DeFalco/Frenz/Breeding. The villains appearing this issue will be the Masters of Destruction: Rhino, Boomerang, Hydro-Man, Beetle, and Speed Demon. Part one of two.

☐**Captain America 321**—Gruenwald/Neary/Beatty.

☐**Vision/Scarlet Witch 12**—(of 12) Englehart/Howell/Springer/Sinnott. The concluding issue.

☐**The Official Handbook of the Marvel Universe 10**

☐**Savage Sword of Conan 127**—Kraar/Docherty/Nebres/Manko. Black and white.

☐**Groo, The Wanderer 19**—Aragones with Evanier.

☐**Bozz Chronicles 4**—Michelinie/Ridgway/Cover by Blevins. Direct sales only.

☐**Ewoks 9**—Manak/Kremer. In search of a fantastic pearl, Teebo and Wicket are captured by an underwater race, who live beneath the great lake of Endor.

☐**Heathcliff 10**

5/20/86 SHIPPING

☐**Avengers 271**—Stern/J. Buscema/Palmer. Guest starring Paladin. Featuring The New Yellowjacket, Screaming Mimi and Grey Gargoyle.

☐**Conan, The Barbarian 186**—Kraar/Docherty/simons. A priate story.

☐**G.I. Joe 51**—Hama/Whigham. Focus on Cobra Emperor and more new Joes, and new Dreadnoks.

☐**Incredible Hulk 323**—Milgrom. Hulk and Banner begin to discorporate.

☐**X-Men 209**—Claremont/Romita, Jr./Green. There is a major battle this issue, while Rachael seeks refuge in Central Park.

☐**Marvel Saga 10**

☐**Captain America Annual 8**—Gruenwald/Zeck/Beatty. The debut of Tess-One.

☐**Eternals 12**—Simonson/S. Buscema. Double-sized conclusion.

☐**Power Man/Iron Fist 125**—Owsley/Bright. Final issue. Issue.

☐**Web of Spider-Man Annual 2**—Nocenti/Art Adams/Vess. Featuring Warlock and the New Mutants.

☐**Marvel Fanfare 28**—Mantlo/Steacy. Alpha Flight story as Northstar becomes reinvolved with his previous terrorist background. Direct sales only.

☐**Marvel Tales 191**—Lee/Kane/Giacoia/Bright/Breeding. Reprinting, in a 64-page special, the 3-part story dealing with drug abuse (originally run without the Comics Code seal.)

☐**Care Bears 6**—Post/D'Agostino/Kremer.

☐**Madballs 1**—Jacobs/Post/Edelman/Kremer. The first of a three-part limited series that introduces the Mad Balls.

☐**Muppet Babies 9**—Kay/Severin.

5/27/86

☐**Fantastic Four 294**—Byrne/Stern/Ordway/Gordon. The FF return to Central City to rescue the She-Hulk and search for the Thing.

☐**Iron Man 210**—Fingeroth/Bright/Akin/Garvey. *Happy's Story*, featuring the return of Happy Hogan and Pepper Potts.

☐**Peter Parker 118**—David/Zeck/McLeod/Buckler. Concluding the child abuse storyline featuring **Shield** and the Mandroids.

☐**Sectaurs 8**

☐**Thor 371**-Simonson/S. Buscema. Justice Peace is the guest star.

☐**Transformers 20**—Budiansky/Trimpe.

☐**X-Factor 8**—L. Simonson/Guice. Jean Grey looks for her sister.

☐**Classic X-Men 1 $1.00**—Cover by Art Adams, back cover by Bolton. Mando reprints of the early **New X-Men** tales combined with new bridging material and stories. In this issue, the reprinting of the first third of "Giant Size" **X-Men** 1 by Wein & Cockrum. Plus, 20 new pages by Claremont and John Bolton, where they go into detail on the recuitment of the new X-Men.

☐**Alpha Flight Annual 1**—Mantlo/Stroman/Talaoc. Lily's spirit takes over the Alpha Flight mansion.

☐**Marvel Team-Up Index 5**—Cover by Pepe Moreno. Stories by Pepe Moreno, John Severin and others. Black and white.

☐**Dr. Strange Graphic Novel**—DeMatteis/Greene. The good Dr. Strange returns to the place where he was created. The Ancient One has gone, but he has left a gift for Doc—the powers of which are a mystery.

☐**Elfquest 14**—Wendy and Richard Pini.

☐**Steelgrip Starkey 1**—(of 6) Weiss is writer & penciller/Sherman is inker and does the cover. The saga of the guy who's not a superhero, but someone doing a job—out to prove that a good man, with the proper tool, can work miracles. He's Steelgrip Starkey, America's hardest working here. Direct sales only.

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☐ Jughead 347

☐ Archie's comic digest 79

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☐ Laugh 396

☐ Betty's Diary 3

☐ Josie & The Pussycats 562

☐ Archie Andrews Where Are You Digest 45

☐ Archie's Activity Book Digest 4

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☐ Archie & Me 158

☐ Katy Keene 16

☐ Betty & Veronic Digest 20

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☐ Archie At Riverdale High 110

☐ Betty & Veronica Summer Fun 561

☐ Jughead Jones Digest 40

COMICO

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☐ Justice Machine 1—Mike Gustovich/Bill Willingham.

☐ Robotech:The Macross Saga 11

☐ Robotech:The Macross Saga 11—Jack Herman/Mike Leeke/Chris Katnick.

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☐ Robotech Masters 8—(Mike Baron/Neil Vokes/Reggie Byers/Keith Wilson/Ken Steacy.

DELUXE

☐ Wally Wood's T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents 6— Perez/Giffen and others.

ECLIPSE

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☐ Scout 7—Timothy Truman/Tom Yeates.

☐ Tales of Terror 6—Bruce Jones and Larry Elmore.

☐ Mr. Monster 6

☐ The Official Justice League of America Index 3

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☐ Adolescent Radioactive Black Belt Hamsters in 3-D—Don Chin and Ty Templeton.

☐ World Of Wood 1

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☐ Champions 1—Dennis Mallonee/Art by Carol Lay.

☐ World of Wood 2

☐ The Official Justice League of America Index 4

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☐ The New DNAgents 9—Evanier/Schauer/Blyberg.

☐ Miracleman 9—Alan Moore/Chuck Beckum

☐ Laser Eraser & Pressbutton in 3-D 1

ELITE

☐ Epsilon Wave 5

☐ Seadragon 1 $1.75—Creator is Carl Knappe/Story by Richard Paolinelli/Pencils by Dennis Yee/Inks by Butch Burcham/Colors by Jonni Parker.

FANTAGRAPHICS

☐ Doomsday Squad 2—John Byrne.

FICTIONEER

☐ Southern Knights Annual 1

FIRST

=/2/86

☐ Nexus 24—Mike Baron, Steve Rude and John Nyberg.

☐ Badger 15—Mike Baron/Bill Reinhold/Rick Bryant.

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☐ Alter Ego 3—Roy Thomas, Ron Harris and Rick Burchett.

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☐ Nexus 24—Mike Baron, Steve Rude and John Nyberg.

☐ Badger 15—Mike Baron, Bill Reinhold and Rick Bryant.

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☐ Grimjack 26—John Ostrander/Tom Sutton/Paul Guinan.

☐ Alter Ego 3—Roy Thomas, Ron Harris and Rick Burchett.

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☐ American Flagg 33—Howard Chaykin, Steven Grant, Mark Badger and Randy Emberlin.

5/23/86 SHIPPING

☐ Hawkmoon Jewel in the Skull 3—Gerry Conway and Rafael Kayanan.

☐ Jon Sable 40—Mike Grell.

5/30/86 SHIPPING

☐ Elric Graphic Novel

☐ The Honeymooners 1 $1.50—Robert Loren Fleming and Vincent Musacchia.

☐ Evangeline 1—Judith Hunt/Ricardo Villagran/Charles Dixon.

☐ March Hare 2—(of 4) Keith Giffen/Rick J. Bryant/Robert Loren Fleming

☐ Code Name Danger 5—Jerry Ordway/Al Gordon/Robert Loren Fleming

NOW

☐ Vector 1—Jim McGrel and Rich Mrozek.

☐ Syphons 1—Allen Curtis.

QUALITY

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☐ 2000 A.D. Monthly 6

VORTEX

☐ Mister X 8

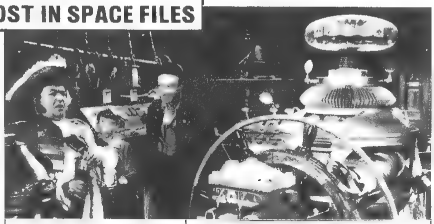
☐ Kelvin Mace 4

Library

(All files magazines are perfect bound with color covers and at least 60 pages)

FILES MAGAZINES

THE LOST IN SPACE FILES



Lost in Space has the distinction of being the show that caused CBS to turn down Star Trek when Gene Roddenberry came around trying to peddle his new series! CBS felt that they already had a bigger winner in the Space Family Robinson. The show had interesting situations, characters that could often display real warmth and fantastic monsters. And it had everyone's favorite robot! Here in a collection of episode guides, interviews, character profiles and cast biographies the entire story is represented, both what was seen on the screen and what happened behind the scenes on the world's first interstellar picnic!

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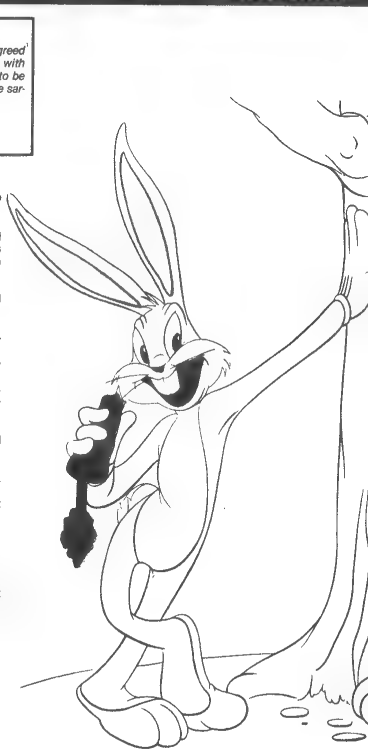
Animated Antics

BY JOEL RASMUSSEN

Although Bugs Bunny still remains quite active, he has agreed to few interviews in the last few years. I managed to catch up with him recently in his secluded Beverly Hills home. I found him to be very warm and likable, though he still maintains that distinctive sarcasm that made his screen character so great.



COMICS FEATURE: Is the character you portrayed on the screen pretty much *you*?

BUGS BUNNY: There's always been a little of my real personality in the character I play, and over the years more of it meshed with the acting to form my screen persona.

CF: In so many of your films you take shots at so-called *straight* society.

BB: My character has always been the sort that gets to actually do the things that others only wish they could do. In some of my earlier films I would pick on people just for the fun of it, but in later films I usually had to be provoked first. Then I'd say something like "of course you realize this means war" and that would begin the main action of the film.

CF: Tell us about getting started in the business.

BB: Well, I grew up in the 30s, the era of the Hollywood "stars", and the beginning of the movies as we know them. From the time I was very young, I knew I wanted to be in the movies. But, of course, there just wasn't a lot of work for rabbits in mainstream films. I really didn't think I had much of a chance in cartoons either. Walt Disney did a lot of cartoons however, and I originally auditioned for Disney when I first got to Hollywood.

CF: You auditioned for Disney? What happened?

BB: Oh, it was a disaster. I was very nervous and the audition just went terrible. I was just one of hundreds of animals that auditioned, and I never actually met Walt Disney or anyone. I don't think he was looking for a rabbit anyway. Walt had worked with Oswald the Rabbit many years earlier, and after they had a big contract dispute, I think Walt just wanted to stay away from rabbits altogether.

CF: When did you finally meet Walt Disney?

BB: It wasn't until many years later, after I'd become successful at Warner, and we just met quickly. It was the same with Mickey Mouse, I never got to know either of them very well. Anyway, after the Disney audition, I just kept my ears open, looking for whatever I could find. It was almost a year later when I heard that Warner was auditioning cartoon animals. I went over there along with everyone else. There

AN INTERVIEW WITH BUGS

BUGS BUNNY DID MUCH OF HIS OWN STUNTWORK.

were less animals than at the Disney auditions, but there was still quite a few others. I'd become friends with many of them. I knew Foghorn Leghorn, and Henry Piggleman, who had earlier been one of the pigs in Disney's "The Three Little Pigs." The three of us spent a lot of time together, and we all went over to Warner's together. I remember it as being no big deal. It was just another audition. So I wasn't disappointed when I didn't hear anything from them.

CF: You mean Warner didn't sign you right away?
BB: Oh, no. They signed another rabbit to do some cartoons for them. But he just didn't work out. They told him to act "looney" and he just went overboard and became obnoxious. It wasn't long before the Warner people knew he wouldn't work out. It was almost *another* year before they called me back for a second audition. I had been in Hollywood for over three years, and I was really beginning to doubt that I'd ever get a break. So, I was ecstatic when they called me back. They had me do a couple of screen tests, and shortly after that, they offered me a six-month contract. When I think back on that first contract it makes me laugh. I was so happy I signed it without asking what I'd be doing or how much I'd be paid or anything. For all I knew, the contract could have been to work as a janitor. But I was so happy to be working it just didn't matter.
CF: How long before you did your first cartoon, "A WildHare."

BB: We started working on it almost right away. Of course, I cringe when I see that film today. I went kind of wacko with the part. The premise was that I was supposed to outsmart this dumb hunter, played by Elmer Fudd. I tried to maintain some type of control which I felt the other rabbit hadn't. I guess it went okay though.

CF: How did the line "What's Up Doc" develop?

BB: One of our sound effects people suggested it I think. Originally, they wanted to call me the "happy rabbit" and have me say "what's cookin'". But I didn't really feel comfortable with that. But, because it was my first film, I didn't want to argue too much. So, I was thankful when somebody suggested "what's up, Doc."

CF: How long did it take you to complete that first film?

BB: Oh, several weeks I'm sure. There were so many things to work out. Things went smoother the more we did, and in our heyday we completed a cartoon every three or four weeks.

CF: When did you meet Elmer Fudd?

BB: Oh, right away. He had been working at Warner as a contract player, so he helped me out by telling me the ins and outs and helping me to relax. I remember that he wasn't too excited to be doing cartoons in the beginning. He wanted to do feature films. But eventually, he became satisfied with cartoons.

CF: When did you first meet Daffy Duck, Porky Pig and the others?

BB: Well, Daffy had been at Warner's since 1937, three years before I got there. His first cartoon was "Porky's Duck Hunt" with Porky Pig. I met Daffy right away you couldn't miss him. He's always been quite a character, pretty much as he appears on the screen. When winter rolled around, he always wanted to fly south and party all winter, but the studio kept giving him better contracts so he stayed year round. Porky Pig had also been at Warner's a number of years when I got there. I didn't see him too much at first. But after awhile I got to know him very well. He was always kind of a father figure. He was always kind and understanding, someone you could talk to when you had a problem. He got along with everyone very well, and could work out problems on the set.

CF: Did you all generally get along well? Were there any ego problems?

BB: Oh, no, no. The producers sometimes battled each other but we actors always got along quite well. Daffy and I did a couple of cartoons in which he complained about getting rotten parts and playing second fiddle to me, but it was all fiction. It was really like a big family on each of the sets. We never had any of the problems like what was reported at Disney, between Donald Duck and others. It was great working for Warners.

CF: Your cartoons became very popular in the late 40s and early 50s, just as Disney shorts were beginning to fade out. Why do you think this happened?

BB: Quite honestly, I think we were making better cartoons than they were. Ours were funnier. We had great settings

and interesting characters. Also, we had, in my opinion, the best cartoon writers in the business working for us. They came up with great stuff.

CF: I once heard it said that your cartoons were actually aimed more at adults than kids....

BB: Oh, yes. They were made to entertain the adults first. I think that was another thing that made our films better. We didn't talk down to our audience. We worked on a higher level than just the bump on the head routine.

CF: When did you first meet Mel Blanc?

BB: Who?

CF: Uh, never mind.

BB: The name does ring a bell. He was one of our sound effects guys I think. But I didn't see him much. He was busy doing the Jack Benny show and other things.

CF: You did cameo appearances with just about everyone at Warner. Who were some of your favorites to work with?

BB: Oh, I enjoyed them all. I always had a lot of fun with Yosemite Sam. I could pull little practical jokes on him off screen that would just drive him crazy. One time, myself and Chuck Jones, one of our producers, went into his dressing room while he was sleeping and put all kinds of hair curlers and barrettes in his beard. He came storming out of his room just furious, and we just about died laughing. I could also break him up on camera very easily. I gave a certain little grin and he would crack up. It was great fun.

CF: You never worked with Porky Pig on screen, how come?

BB: It was just felt that our characters wouldn't work well together. He was fine with Daffy and some of the others, but he was a pretty even-tempered character and it was hard to get a funny situation between the two of us. Of course, we did work together more recently in some of our television specials, "A Rabbit in King Arthur's Court" and others.

NOT EVERYONE ALWAYS REACTED THE SAME WAY TO HIS SUCCESS—AT LEAST PUBLICLY.

CF: The great Hollywood stars always seemed to just play themselves, like Humphrey Bogart, Marilyn Monroe, Mickey Mouse and yourself. Why is that?

BB: Hmmm...I don't know. You just go with what's successful I guess. I don't think I could see myself doing a totally serious film. It's just not me.

CF: Why didn't you or any of the others at Warner make any feature length films, like Disney?

BB: Mostly financial reasons. We would have loved to make a feature film but the company executives wouldn't let us. You have to understand that our cartoons weren't making a great deal of money when they were first released. It wasn't until years later when the cartoons were put on tv that the *real* money was made.

CF: What were some of your favorite cartoons to make?

BB: I really enjoyed doing "What's Up Doc" in 1950 with Elmer Fudd. It *told* how our careers began. Of course, it was totally fictional, but it won an Academy Award. I also enjoyed the take-offs on the classics, such as "What's Opera Doc" and "The Rabbit of Seville".

CF: Do you ever watch any of your old cartoons?

BB: I don't make a concerted effort to see them, but I do happen to see them at film festivals, and sometimes on tv.

CF: You mentioned earlier that you knew Foghorn Leghorn before you both worked at Warner. When did he finally get his break?

BB: Oh, it was about 1946 I think, and I got him a special audition at Warners. Of course, he claims they saw his talent and good looks and hired him immediately. Actually, I had to convince the people at Warners to give him a chance They signed him for just one cartoon, and it went well, so he was hired.

CF: Tell us about some of the other characters, such as Sylvester the Cat, Tweety, the Roadrunner and Wil.E. Coyote.

BB: Well, when I was working at Warners I didn't see any of those you mentioned real often. The Roadrunner and Wil E. were usually off in the desert making their films. Wil E. Coyote did all of his own stunts you know. They were only at the main studio once in awhile for promotion and what not. I didn't see a lot of Sylvester and Tweety either. I do remember that Sylvester was always a very likeable sort of fellow, easy to get along with. Tweety could get stubborn at times though.

CF: How did working for Warner differ from working at some of the other studios, such as Disney and MGM?

BB: Well, of course I never worked for any of the others, but I know that everyone wanted to work for Warners. You

knew you had some security. If your first cartoon went well, you were usually signed to a long term contract, and became part of the family. That contrasts with Disney in that although you were signed to a long contract, you generally only did one film, and then spent the rest of your career just promoting that one film. At Warners you got to make many films, and they were willing to experiment with new characters and types of films. I can think of only a very few characters that didn't work out at Warners. Once you got in, you could usually count on a good future making many more films.

CF: Once you personally became so successful, how did you handle the pressures of stardom.

BB: I've always liked being very active, so the pace really never bothered me. I've always had a few close friends that I spend a lot of time with.

CF: When did you quit making the short features?

BB: It was early in 1964. They announced it to us about six months before production was actually shut down. I kind of had a hunch that things were coming to an end, but we were still surprised and saddened when it actually happened. But, I was very pleased shortly thereafter when they put together the Bugs Bunny/Road Runner show for tv. We shot an opening and closing, plus scenes for between cartoons. It was the first time our cartoons were on for mass audiences. I thought the cartoons worked well together in a one hour format. For many years it was the number one rated Saturday morning show.

CF: Do you still keep in touch with each other today?

BB: Oh, yes. We see each other all the time. We do all the tv specials and things. Porky has a small farm in southern California; he's pretty much retired. Elmer spends a lot of time in the northern part of the U.S.; he still *loves* to hunt. Daffy flies all over, but does spend quite a bit of time in Los Angeles. Foghorn Leghorn has a farm in northern Iowa, where he keeps a large flock of chickens.

CF: What's in your future?

BB: Well, we're always working on the tv specials and things. I stay very busy doing promotional work, but at the same time, I relax enough to enjoy the good things. I really have a very good life.

CF: One final question: Do you really drink carrot juice?

BB: Yes, it's great. Want to try some?

CF: Sure, why not? Thank you, Bugs.

BB: Thank you.

CF

STRIP SEARCH

MAX ALLAN COLLINS

In a previous issue of **COMICS FEATURE**, I explored the contributions of superstar mystery novelist Mickey Spillane to the world of comics.

Spillane's contribution to the comics is perhaps the most widely known among mystery writers who've worked in the four-color field; but he is most certainly not alone. Dashiell Hammett wrote "Secret Agent X-9," on which he was succeeded by Leslie Charteris of The Saint fame. Manley Wade Wellman and William Woolfolk—both of whom wrote suspense and mystery novels—were contributors to **The Spirit** during Will Eisner's absence during WW2. And, of course, your columnist was a publishing mystery novelist years before "Dick Tracy" and **Ms. Tree** came under his pen.

My enthusiasm for comics and mystery fiction converge in Spillane, who has been my "idea!" (as Li'l Abner would put it) for many years. What follows is an account of my personal encounters with Spillane, focusing upon his comic strip/comic-book experiences.

When the plane landed at the Myrtle Beach airport, the case of nerves finally hit me. It wasn't the landing: coming from Muscatine, Iowa to South Carolina took two flights that encompassed four puddle-jump landings and, except for the one that had woken me up (I hadn't slept much the night before), none of the landings bothered me, really. And the sight of blue ocean as the plane had gradually descended to come in for its landing had been tranquilly beautiful.

But as the plane rolled to a stop, and as I stepped out into the aisle of the plane, carrying a copy of Spillane's **The Body Lovers** (which I'd re-read on the flight), it came to me: *you're about to visit Mickey Spillane.*

Now, I'd met Spillane before – almost exactly a year before, at the Bouchercon, mystery fandom's major convention, which that year had been in Milwaukee – but the prospect of meeting him on his home turf suddenly overwhelmed me ...

BLACK SHEEP AMONG WOLVES

Spillane, of course, has always been sort of the black sheep of mystery fiction; and that Bouchercon I'd met him at had been, well – historically significant. Despite his being the bestselling mystery writer of all time, the prevailing attitude among his fellow mystery writers and among much of so-called mystery "fandom" over the years, has been one of apparent distain. Never mind that the popularity of his books had given mystery fiction a much-needed postwar shot in the arm; never mind that paperback originals virtually owed their existence to Spillane, as the pioneer Fawcett Gold Medal was expressly designed to provide the public with Spillane-style fare.

But then, around ten years ago, several voices began to be heard in mystery fandom who admitted to liking Spillane (occasionally, over the years, a mystery fan would cop to reading a Mike Hammer story, finding it "fun" if trash). Now, many of us consider him one of the major talents ever to write mysteries, placing him (and not the more critically acceptable Ross MacDonald) with Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler as the third member of the Unholy Trinity of Tough Mystery Fiction.

Why should one of the most popular authors of the twentieth century need defending? Easy, as Mike Hammer might say: his subject matter and his approach were so hard-hitting, so individual, that Spillane repelled the more proper and staid among the Literary Establishment (and the Establishment in general - including Dr. Frederic Wertham and **Parent's Magazine** and other unappointed arbiters of public morality, who lumped Spillane in with the dreaded comic books, the field that spawned him).

And it has taken time, and changing mores -- plus the natural p.r. knack of Spillane himself, with such disarming tactics as funny self-parody beer commercials, bragging about his comic book roots and the writing of award-winning children's books to give him his rightful place as the living giant among mystery writers.

MICKEY SPILLANE: MY "IDEEL"

GOOD MORNING, BOSS. WE'VE GOT BUSINESS THIS...
DID YOU EVER MEET VELDA? LOVELY, LOVELY VELDA WHO WAS ALMOST ENOUGH TO DRIVE EVEN MURDER OUT OF A MAN'S MIND — ALMOST, BUT NOT QUITE...
TOSS IT IN THE FILE, SUGAR, THEN COME IN THE OFFICE.
DID YOU START A FRESH WAR LAST NIGHT, FINDING OUT EVERYTHING YOU CAN ABOUT AN OLD MAN WHO WAS BUMPED OFF THIS TIME?
LISTEN, HONEY, MIKE? WHAT IS IT DOWN ON THE BOWERY THEN SEE IF YOU CAN TIE HIM IN WITH JOAN LARAY, THE GIN MILL WARBLER.

I KNEW THERE'D BE A DAME IN THIS! OKAY, GALAHAD, WHAT ELSE?
COOL OFF, KITTEN. SEE IF YOU CAN DIG UP THE DETAILS ON HOW HER UNCLE GOT SHANGHAIED OUT OF HIS LOOT. I'LL CALL BACK LATER.
MIKE, BE CAREFUL, PLEASE?
TAKE IT EASY, BABY. I'M NOT MY SECRETARY TOO MUCH TO LOSE HER THE HARD WAY.

LIAISONS

When, in the summer of 1981, it was announced that Spillane would be a guest at Bouchercon, I immediately called the con organizers to confirm it; and they in turn asked me, as a contemporary mystery writer who had been one of the most vocal of Spillane's defenders, if I would mind serving as the official liaison between the con and Spillane. A tough decision for me to make ....

Anyone who is a fan—a dyed-in-the-wool, psychotic fan like myself -- will know how nervous, how sleepless, the night before my first meeting with Spillane was. It is dangerous to make an idol of anyone; the actor or actress, the baseball player, the rock star, the author, famous as they might be, are human beings all. And occasionally they are lousy human beings who happen to be famous and/or talented. Even the best of them, inevitably, are human beings who have good days and bad. On the day you come face to face with your idol, that idol might be having an exceptionally bad day, and snap your head off when you ask for a simple autograph. A friend of mine who was one of Walt Kelly's biggest fans met his hero at a National Cartoonists Society affair where Kelly was apparently inebriated and gave his die-hard fan only a "Get away, kid, you bother me," for his trouble. To my friend's credit, he thought (and thinks) no less of Kelly for it. My friend was wise enough to understand that, where heroes are concerned, feet of clay come with the territory. I knew this, preparing mentally to meet the Mick. I also knew I'd had a recurring nightmare since I was age 13 in which I finally met Spillane and he turned out to be a thoroughly nasty individual who told me to get the hell out of his sight.

Shortly after arriving at Bouchercon, my wife Barb accompanied me to Spillane's top floor suite of the hotel in Milwaukee. I knocked, and Spillane opened the door, and he seemed small to me, at first. He waved us in, genuinely glad to see us, and treated me like an old friend, talking about how glad he was to "finally" get to meet me, telling me he'd read my books and liked them pretty well -- "You're improving," he said.

I'm usually not at a loss for words, but I was tongue-tied, my brain overloading at the thought of Spillane sitting

SO I WENT BACK TO THE BOWERY... BACK TO SLUM ALLEY... BUT I WASN'T THE ONLY ONE WITH IDEAS...
A COUPLE OF CLAMS BUT DO THEY TAKE A RIDE TO HEADQUARTERS, CAPTAIN CHAMBERS?
YEAH - TOSS 'EM IN. WE'LL QUESTION THEM DOWNTOWN.
WELL - MIKE, LAD I DON'T TELL ME YOU'RE LOOKING FOR ANSWERS ON THIS STREET OF SILENCE, TOO!
YOU HIT IT, KID... BUT NOT YOU'RE WAY. THOSE BOYS AREN'T SPILLING ANYTHING TO YOU.
LOOK... SPRING THOSE TWO AND LET ME HAVE A CRACK AT IT. MAKE IT LOOK GOOD AND WE'LL SPLIT THE INFO.
YOU TALK ME OUT OF MY GOOD SENSE, MIKE. OKAY, WE'LL GIVE IT A TRY. MAKE LIKE YOU'RE A LOCAL HARD HEELER.

IT DIDN'T TAKE ME LONG TO REALIZE HOW LUCKY I WAS IN HAVING CHOSEN SPILLANE AS MY HERO!

down and reading something I'd written.

Fortunately Spillane took control, and immediately began spinning yarns, putting us at ease with his smile and his enthusiasm. He told us, as if we were kids sitting around a campfire, the stories that would make up his next three young adult books. And he seemed larger than life, now; big.

But not *too* big, as I was to learn over the next two days, during which time I hogged the chair next to Spillane whenever he held court (which was generally in the coffee shop downstairs -- he avoided the bar, as he doesn't drink when he's working -- and he saw the Bouchercon appearance as work, since Miller Lite had brought him in for the affair). Spillane was "on", but in a most unpretentious, natural manner. I have been around a few celebrities in my time, but have seen none as friendly and open and down-to-earth as Spillane. It didn't take me long in Milwaukee to realize how lucky I was in having chosen Spillane as my hero.

CONNING THE CON

At Bouchercon one afternoon, Spillane and I made up a two-man panel, which amounted to me interviewing Mickey in front of the assembled convention. And it went very well, though despite my best efforts to crack Spillane's defenses, many of the pat answers and patented anecdotes I had hoped to do end runs around got recycled as answers to my question, anyway. Several of the questions focused on his comic-book writing career, and he mentioned The Human Torch as a character he specifically liked writing. He charmed the con -- conned the con, if you will -- and even those who came not liking his writing went away liking the man. He put up with an endless autograph session. He jawed hours on end with fans and fellow writers. He attended the evening movie showings, and introduced **The Girl Hunters**, the movie in which he stars as Hammer("That was me thirty pounds ago"). Then later, when an episode of the **Mike Hammer** series was shown, he stood afterward and shouted good-naturedly to the audience -- "I didn't write that!"

They loved him, and it is to the '81 Bouchercon's credit that Spillane was invited, and for the first time ever put into direct contact with mystery fandom.

KEEPIN' IT TOUGH

After the Bouchercon, I kept in touch with Spillane -- just before he'd gotten in a cab to go to the airport, he'd given me his home phone number. So, now and then, I would call him; every couple of months -- usually when I had a reason to, such as to get his reaction to the new **Mike Hammer**

"I SETTLED FOR COFFEE THE NEXT MORNING AND THEN STRAINED ON THE HANKIES... I'D NEED IT FOR WHAT I PLANNED FOR A COUPLE PERKS BOUNCING AROUND LOOSE, BUT FIRST, I HAD TO STOP AT THE OFFICE."
© 1987 BY MICKEY FEATURES

movie. And I kept sending my novels to him, as they appeared. He continued to say nice things about them -- namely, that I was still improving.

Finally, *he* called *me*, one Sunday afternoon. At his request, I'd sent him a copy of the manuscript of my new novel, **True Detective**, a long historical private eye story set in Chicago of the early '30s. My most ambitious to date, I'd talked to him about it a lot during its writing, so he had asked to see it. And he called and told me he thought it was "terrific."

Allow me an understatement: **this meant a lot to me**. Back in Milwaukee, I had a couple of times asked Spillane to come down to our room to meet us before going to eat or whatever. His room on an upper floor couldn't be gotten to by elevator, because the top several floors were accessed only by a special key. But he never would -- either we had to climb up to him, or simply meet him in the lobby. This confused me, but my wife straightened me out: "He's Mickey Spillane. He doesn't come to you. You go to him." Right. Nice as he is, as unpretentious as he is, Spillane the mountain was not about to come to I, the mohammed. I came to accept this bit of wisdom on my wife's part -- and it helped me to understand why my letters didn't always get answered (though they were obviously read) and why I called him, but he never called me.

Only this once he did call me. To tell me I'd written a good book. Despite his seeming disdain for anything "literary," Spillane respects a good book and a writer for having written it. This book had somehow opened a door. The respect was now mutual. I wasn't sure I deserved that respect, but I took it -- and I took the invitation to come down to Murrell's Inlet and visit him for a few days.

GOING TO THE MOUNTAIN

He greeted me at the airport; he wore a black t-shirt and white shorts and the Spillane grin. His grin disarmed me easier than Mike Hammer taking a rod off a dame.

And the next two days were casual and comfortable, with Mickey driving me around the Myrtle Beach area, showing me the sights from the front seat of his "Carolina Cadillac" (a pick-up truck--his fabled white '56 Jag is seldom used), pointing out the development of condos and such along the ocean with a mixture of pride and sadness -- sad to see civilization come knocking at his door, but pleased that this "neck of the woods" he'd spotted from a P-51 many years before has been found so desirable by others.

Much time was spent sitting around the Shipwreck Bar, a charmingly ramshackle affair built around some trees in Spillane's front yard (which also has a hammack). Spillane's son Ward, a successful charter fisherman, lives with his father, and is about my age, so we swapped some

"THEY MISSED WITH THE THOMPSON... AND I COULDN'T BLAST BACK BECAUSE A COUPLE OF KIDS WERE IN THE WAY! IT'S STARTED BLOOD! A MAN IN THE RAIN... A LONELY HALF-BLONDE CROUCHED OVER A DEAD MAN... A SAXY ARTIST KILLED IN MY ARMS -- AND I KNEW ONE THING... SOMEBODY WAS GONNA PAY DAY FOR IT THE HARD WAY."

"YOU CAN'T BE YOU SPILLANE. I'M STI

stories about playing in rock 'n' roll bands in younger days. Every few minutes, it seemed, a tourist or two would drop by, and be greeted by a friendly Spillane, handing out Miller beers to strangers as if to nextdoor neighbors. Also present was Spillane's longtime buddy Dave Gerrity, who lived nearby and who carried on an unending good-natured verbal battle with the Mick on every subject you can think of.

Dave Gerrity has since died, unfortunately. He was one of a group of satellite writers who sprang up around Spillane in the '50's. These were friends of Spillane's who sought his help, both in terms of teaching them to write and in landing publishing contracts -- these include Charlie Wells (**Let The Night Cry**, Signet, 1953; **The Last Kill**, Signet, 1955) and Earle Baskinsky (**The Big Steal**, E.P. Dutton, 1955; **Death Is A Cold, Keen Edge**, Signet, 1956). Gerrity alone made a reputation of his own, and his list of suspense novels includes the excellent **The Plastic Man** (Signet, 1976) and **Dragon Hunt** (Signet, 1965). The latter is loosely based on a 1954 continuity in the Mike Hammer comic strip (likely by "Hammer" artist Ed Robbins, who at one point was going to collaborate with Dave on the novel version). A good, slightly tongue-in-cheek private eye yarn worth searching out in the used book bins, **Dragon Hunt** "introduces" private eye Peter Braid (in his only appearance to date), and includes a few appearances by Mike Hammer himself (Spillane is pictured with Gerrity on the back cover -- the gifts of Hammer as a character, a supportive cover blurb and the basic comic strip story show Spillane's generosity with his writer friends).

SWAPPING TALES

Conversation around the Shipwreck Bar often included anecdotes about the comic book business -- one of these had Spillane and cartoonist Mike Roy (who later drew "The Saint" comic strip) walking along Broadway and spotting an open competition for "best painting." Spillane and Roy entered the gallery and Spillane said to Roy, "You can do better than these guys." Roy nodded thoughtfully, went home and the next morning brought back and hung a painting, not yet dry, which took top honors -- and $1000 grand prize.

Another story had the next-door neighbor of the comic book studio being a theatrical producer whose expensive sets were destroyed in a trucking accident. Again overnight, as a lark, and gratis, the comic book artists got together and whipped up some sets for the producer, saving the day.

Spillane has a genuine affection for his comic book years, when he was earning a good living as a writer, but without the attendant hassles of fame and controversy. He seemed anxious to show me the hand-colored stat of the original **Mike Danger** cover, never published, of the comic book he and Harry Sahle had put together about a tough private eye. When the comic book market fell through (due in part, Spillane says, to dwindling sales on the less-populated postwar Army bases where in wartime PXs comics had been big sellers), Spillane had changed **Danger**

LAY OFF, BUSBY. I'LL TELL YUH MISTER, THERE AIN'T NO REASON NOT TO. THE OLD MAN WASN'T AFRAID OF COPPERS, YOU'RE NOT LYIN' ABOUT THAT MEAL?
YOU'LL EAT IT. DON'T WORRY. WHO WAS HE? WHERE DID HE LIVE?
WE CALLED HIM THE DEACON - HE HAD A FLOP JUST AROUND THE NEXT CORNER. ON REAL COLD NIGHTS HE'D LET ME SLEEP ON THE FLOOR. HE WAS A RIGHT GUY, MISTER - I HOPE THE GUY WHO KILLED TIM CROAKS.
HE CROAKED ALREADY. I'M AFTER THE PUNK WHO HIRED TIM. HERE'S FIVE. GO ENJOY THIS MEAL.

GENERATION'S MICKEY HERE!"

to **Hammer** and the rest is publishing history.

He also seemed very pleased with the recently published paperback collection of the "Mike Hammer" comic strip which I'd co-edited and written the introduction for (the second and final volume has been recently released by publisher Ken Pierce). He remembered working with Ed Robbins, writing the Sunday pages himself, plotting daily stories for Robbins to script. (Spillane and Robbins were still friends -- a recent-years vintage oil portrait of the Mick by Ed hangs just inside the front door of Spillane's home. Ed, unfortunately, passed away in 1982).

"DON'T EVER DO THAT AGAIN!"

There was more to the Spillane visit— -- I was allowed to sit in one of Spillane's three offices and look over various movie and radio scripts and several long fragments of Hammer stories Mickey decided not to finish. I looked through hundreds of 8 by 10 stills of Mickey filming *The Girl Hunters* in England. In another office -- kept locked by Spillane -- I stood and stared at the original cover paintings of **One Lonely Night** and **I, the Jury.** Then there was the first evening when Spillane took me to a seafood place frequented more by the locals than tourists. I took advantage of the gracious Spillane being waylaid by some autograph seekers and went over and paid the check -- only to glance across the room and see Mike Hammer glaring at me. "Did I see you do something nasty?" he said to me on my return. I stammered. "Don't ever do that again," he said. I didn't. On Saturday afternoon I accompanied Mickey to a shopping mall. When at a sporting goods store he bought two pairs of 3-D glasses for his son and himself, for an upcoming 3-D TV presentation, I couldn't resist asking if it was *The Jury*, the '53 3-D movie version which Spillane despises. He just glowered at me affably. We then went to the mall's bookstore, where he checked to see how his new young adult's book (**The Ship That Never Was**) was doing -- they were sold out and had more on order, having sold 500 copies already. That pleased Mickey.

HAPPY ENDING

Before I left Sunday morning, I asked Mickey if I could take a few foreign editions of his books home (he is the world's fifth most widely translated author, and two massive bookcases in his study are overflowing with proof of this) and he said take all you want. Like any good collector, I made a pig of myself, taking three Miller Lite bags of books home with me. I was afraid Mickey would be irritated with my enthusiasm, but he was only amused. In fact, he helped make my suitcase heavier by letting me have several magazines with Spillane stories I hadn't managed to track down (his only copies -- "I'll know where they are if I need 'em"). And some scripts based on his work, including both the 1953 *I, The Jury* script and the current remake, as well as the new movie and several scripts from the old Darren McGavin series, sent to him for approval back in the '50s and, in two cases, still sealed.

During the visit we had spoken several times about the possibility of a new Mike Hammer novel -- it's been over a decade since the last one. Mickey, despite occasional protestations and claims of indifference to Hammer and the writing game, seemed to be on the verge...

On Saturday, when he was driving me around in his Carolina Cadillac, he said to me, "What do you mean, you want to be your generation's Mickey Spillane'?" I said -just that: my ambition was to be the mystery writer of my generation, as he was of his.

"You can't be your generation's Mickey Spillane," he said, ingenuously. "I'm still here. *I'm* your generation's Mickey Spillane."

He had me there.

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